

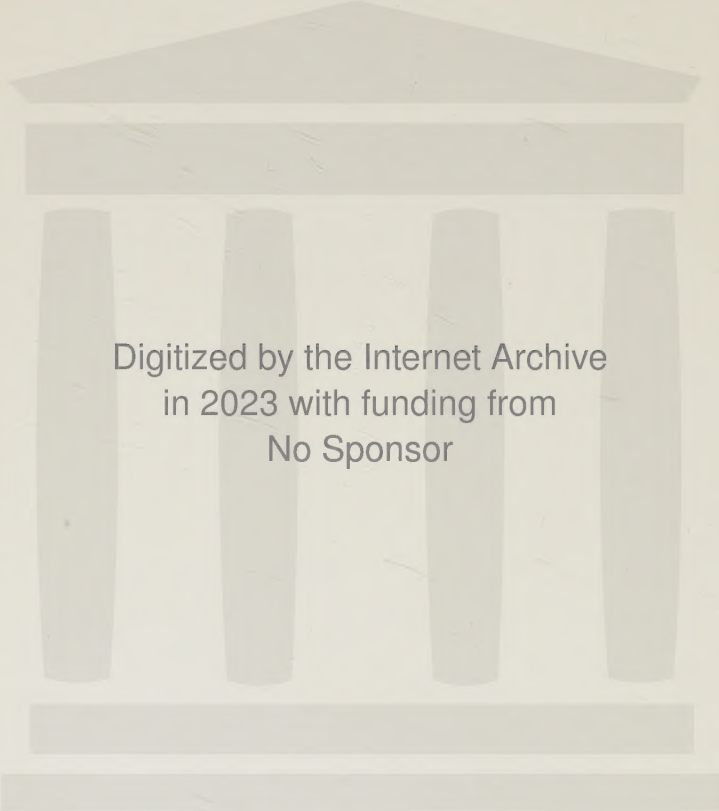
MY
AFRICAN
NEIGHBORS

HANS COUDENHOVE

124







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MY AFRICAN NEIGHBORS



THE AUTHOR
WITH ONE OF HIS AFRICAN NEIGHBORS

MY AFRICAN NEIGHBORS

MAN, BIRD, AND BEAST
IN NYASALAND

BY

HANS COUDENHOVE



Illustrated

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MAJOR CHARLES THORBURN
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is no pretense at either method or science in these gleanings from the store of my experience. If I venture to publish them at all, I do so because I imagine that the long-continued reiteration of impressions may counterbalance, even in the least receptive of minds, the absence of scientific methods, which sometimes enable trained investigators to reach interesting results in a fraction of the time required for the process by less favored individuals.

Owing to circumstances, the consequence partly of choice and partly of the caprice of destiny, my contact with natives and with animals, in those parts of tropical Africa where I have lived, has been more prolonged in time, more exclusive, and more intense than is usually the case with Europeans. There lie my qualification and my excuse for lifting my voice, even if there has been no premeditated research, and if, like Mr. Barnstaple in Utopia, "I left my mind passive. Quite passive."

How thoroughly I became estranged from things European since I first came to Africa in 1896 — just in time to see Zanzibar bombarded by British men-of-war — may be gathered from the following records.

I went back to England for a few months in 1898, then returned to Africa. Since that time I have

recrossed the Equator only once, for a few hours, in Jubaland. I have never seen an airplane, or a dirigible balloon, or a motor-bus, or a taxicab, or a motor-boat, or a wireless apparatus, or a cloud-picture, or the president of a republic, or a portrait of Einstein, or a Bolshevik. Incidentally, I have not slept in a bed for twelve years, having acquired the habit of sleeping on a deck-chair instead, under conditions which made it advisable that I should be "up and doing" and "all there," within half a second of waking up.

I last saw and used a railway train in 1910, on the Tanganyika line; but I saw and crossed railway lines again — for the first time since then — on November 27, 1924, after a lapse of fourteen years, as I was driving to Blantyre from Zomba in a motor-car — my first car-ride since 1919, and the fifth in nineteen years. It was a very peculiar experience to see the shining white rails running at right and left between the brown embankments. In a flash I realized, more than I had ever done before, what iron rails stand for. I have not seen the sea since 1910, and since that year, only one horse, which was the property of a Lutheran missionary in Ukinga.

I have been in movies twice in my life, last in Tanga sixteen years ago. I have not been in a theatre for twenty-eight years. The last time I went to a white people's dance was twenty-two years ago, and I have never seen any of the modern dances — "jazz," I think they are called. The last wedding to

which I went was thirty years ago in Europe, and that was in a synagogue; the memory has stayed, because the only other Gentile guest besides myself was the Mother Superior of the Catholic convent in which the bride, an intelligent and docile pupil, had attended all courses except those in religion.

For considerable periods of time my intercourse with people of my own race has been nil. For a period of five years I did not sit down to a single meal with another human being, and the same number of years passed without my exchanging a word with a European woman. When two fox terriers of mine, at that time three years of age, saw for the first time a white lady, they were terrified, and nothing could induce them to come on to the verandah where she was sitting.

The longest time *in continuo* which I spent without setting eyes on a European was eight months, — it had been nearly as long again before that, — and then the white men were traveling and did not even stop near my camp for the night.

During all these months and years natives were my sole companions, and my only friends were those whom the destroyer of creation affects to call “dumb.”

I am not a stranger to the joys and comforts of European society, such as they existed up to thirty years ago, and I confess, with all due respect for the prophets of progress, that I have never missed a single one of them — not for a single day.

The Arab poet opines that it is one of the three

great joys of life to “ride on camels through country unknown.” The greatest of all felicities, I think, is to lie stretched out in one’s open tent on a ridge, after a fatiguing forenoon’s march, and to look down over miles of uninhabited Nyika, one’s faithful dogs asleep at one’s side.

HANS COUDENHOVE

KIVA MALEMIA
1925

MY AFRICAN NEIGHBORS

THE chapter on "The Negro Mind" appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* for August, 1923; that on "The Bambesi" appeared in *The Field* for Christmas, 1922. Certain of the other chapters were first given to the public in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

I

MY AFRICAN NEIGHBORS

OLD PRESIDENT KRÜGER is reported to have said that the white man who understands a native has not yet been born. C. J. Rhodes used to call the natives "those poor children"; but he was not, like Krüger, born and brought up among them and to him, on his towering height, they were, no doubt, only those poor children. To one who is in incessant contact with them without being officially a master, they will, although often reminding him of children, appear vastly different in essence. Natives are often childlike, but much oftener childish, in the expression of merriment and in their entertainments; and sometimes they appear to bring into their intercourse with the white man who has gained — or thinks he has gained — their confidence the trustfulness of children. But these are about all the points of resemblance between the two.

There are, however, a great many points of resemblance between natives and Europeans, irrespective of age; and these are the more striking by contrast with the many points of difference. But it is in the character of the native himself that the greatest contrasts occur. As regards taste, for instance: one and the same individual will on one occasion show remarkable artistic instinct, and on another he will exhibit the greatest delight in things which, to a white man,

appear both inartistic and ugly. In many tribes men and women are fond of decorating their heads with flowers, and in doing so show a just appreciation of the effects of form and color. And yet the very men and women who display exquisite judgment when they adorn themselves with the means which Nature has put at their disposal, forfeit all their artistic sense the moment they come in touch with European wearing apparel, and walk about, perfectly absurd objects, with flayed tropical helmets, in torn coats and trousers either three times too large or three times too small for their size. I once tore off the worn black-cloth cover of my diary. When my cook appeared before me on the following morning, he was wearing it round his neck as an ornament.

Years ago, when I was living in Taveta, in British East Africa, Malikanoi, one of the two paramount chiefs of the Wataveta, wore a shock of unusually long, unkempt hair. He was supposed to be a magician, and his subjects believed that his occult powers, like those of Samson as an athlete, lay in his hair. As he dressed, besides, in nondescript old discolored European garments, his appearance could not be called either prepossessing or dignified. As the time came near when his son — a splendid lad, who, at the age of sixteen, had killed a lion single-handed with his spear — was to come of age, Malikanoi announced that, in honor of the occasion, he would shave off his hair.

I was invited to the festivities as a guest; and, in consequence, on the day appointed, I repaired to the Taveta forest, where the dances took place. There,



CELEBRATING THE PROWESS OF A YOUNG LION-
HUNTER WHO KILLED HIS BEAST SINGLE-HANDED,
WITH A SPEAR

*This photograph (Underwood and Underwood, New York) was made by Peter
Dutkewich on the occasion to which the author refers on page 4*

sitting on an old deck-chair, I found the chief; and my surprise was as great as must have been, in Mr. Locke's novel, that of Ephraim's guests, when Clementina Wing made her appearance in a hundred-guinea gown and diamonds. His head and face were clean-shaven, and I noticed for the first time the Cæsarean outline of his clear-cut profile. He was wrapped in the ample folds of a toga, dyed the color of amethyst, and he had wound round his bald head a single string of glass beads of the same color as the toga. He presented a perfect picture, and I said to myself that the mere imagining of such a combination as the toga and the glass beads of one and the same color indicated profound artistic feeling. Yet for years that man had walked about looking like a buffoon.

Another field where the contradictions in a Negro's æsthetic notions are very apparent is that of the dances. Some are very beautiful, and others very ugly; yet the performers themselves do not appear to see any difference. The Wakinga of the Livingstone Range, for instance, have a dance with solos which might have been, and perhaps — who knows? — was performed before the shrine of some Greek deity in the days of Pericles. Nothing more beautiful, from a choregraphic point of view, could be imagined. And yet these same people have another dance — I regret to say it is the more popular of the two — which, so far as ugliness goes, baffles description. After a time, I forbade it in my camp, where small groups were frequently performing it. My wish was respected, but, as a punishment, I suppose, for my

want of taste, the other, the beautiful dance, was never again executed in my presence, although I repeatedly asked for it.

It is the same with their songs. Many natives, as is well known, have splendid voices, mostly baritone and tenor, rarely bass. Some of their choruses are a pleasure to listen to. But they will, in the midst of their songs, no matter whether they are performing singly or with others, often change all of a sudden into an ear-rending falsetto, without apparently feeling conscious of any difference. They call it "singing with the small voice," and protests are received with surprise.

Nowhere, however, is the inconsequential behavior of the native more glaring than where his cleanliness is concerned. Except in the waterless plains, and where they are in the habit of coating themselves with oil and red ochre, — the one generally coincides with the other, — most natives are extremely fond of bathing. This is especially the case in hilly countries, traversed by many streams. They do not appear to mind the cold in the least, and often bathe in midwinter before sunrise. Certain tribes, like that of the Wayao of Nyasaland, might be said to be fanatically fond of bathing. They bathe three and four times a day, and their bath is as great a necessity to them as food or drink.

A curious consequence of this admirable quality has been, on several occasions, the complete failure of attempts on my part to cure people of skin diseases or ulcers. Patients with diseases which necessitated the keeping on of an ointment for several

consecutive days would persist in bathing at least once a day, heedless of the fact that they were getting rid, in the process, of all the stuff which was to bring them health or relief; while others could not be prevented from taking off, while bathing, bandages which had been carefully swathed round their limbs an hour or two before. And yet the garments of these very people — some of whom will rather suffer disease than go, for a short period, without their daily bath — very often, particularly when they have adopted European garb, teem with lice, as their huts swarm with bugs and, too often also, with the dangerous recurrent-fever ticks.

Besides being, to all appearance, quite indifferent to vermin, they lack the most rudimentary notions of hygiene and sanitation, even in countries long inhabited by white men, and do not seem to feel the slightest disgust when they come into contact with those nameless things which, since the days of Philoctetes, fill every European with horror. In this respect they are simply exasperating: to treat people with ulcers, a duty which now and then falls to the lot of every traveler in tropical Africa, is a most thankless task. They will drop the soiled cotton-wool just detached from their sores anywhere near, and put their hands or their feet on it with the greatest unconcern. Once I actually found a man, a Ngoni, washing his soiled bandage in his cooking-pot, with the stream running past not a hundred yards away.

The mention of this incident reminds me of a native peculiarity against which every traveler and

every settler in tropical Africa has been fighting from time immemorial, and will probably go on fighting until the end of time. No matter how near to the camping-place or to the house the stream passes, the servants will never carry the cups, pots, and plates to it, in order to wash them in the running water; they will, instead, carry a bucket with water to the kitchen or to the cooking-place, and here wash everything in the same water.

The single inland tribe of my acquaintance that forms an exception to this general rule of indifference to the cleanliness of their surroundings is the Wasokiri to the north of Lake Nyasa. They might have been to school in Holland.

It is often mentioned, as a proof of the native's tacit admission of the white man's superiority, that he will always, when he has the choice, come to the latter for cure of disease, in preference to his own doctors. But his ineradicable objection to hospitals, where such exist, does not support this opinion. It is a curious fact that many natives share with a considerable number of the poor classes among white people the idea that, in hospital, they are being experimented upon; while others are convinced that a stay in the hospital inevitably means the loss of a limb. I have known many cases of natives who, rather than agree to being taken into the hospital, would resign themselves to the prospect of endless suffering or death; and many more where the patients, after being told that they would be sent to the hospital, simply vanished.

On closer examination, this apparent preference of

the native for European remedies, where their use does not imply a visit to the hospital, reduces itself, like most native questions, to one of pounds, shillings, and pence. Europeans generally charge nothing at all, or only nominally, for their assistance, while native doctors are very expensive, comparatively speaking. The fees vary from three to fifteen shillings and more; or, where coin is not yet in general use, the equivalent in goods. In Nyasaland the fee for curing an ulcer is three shillings; for relieving an impaired digestion, six; for more dangerous diseases, fifteen. This fee is never paid in advance, and — a detail which might be recommended for adoption in civilized communities — only when the cure has been a total success. When natives are asked what would happen if they did not pay up after being cured, they declare that the cured patient would immediately fall ill again, and, if he persisted in his refusal, die.

Many writers on African affairs, and the majority of settlers, are of opinion that the marked changes that appear in the general behavior of male African Negroes when they first start courting are of a pathological nature; and for many years I shared this view. But of late I have come to ask myself whether these changes are not simply the effect of various drugs, to the use of which, at that particular period of their existence, natives are much addicted, and of which they partake with that absence of moderation which characterizes them whenever it is a question of gratifying the senses.

Several of these elixirs are in use in that country; the one reputed to have the most effect is made by

boiling the inner bark of a tree which is conspicuous, where it occurs, by the dark color of its small leaves, in contrast with the lighter green of the Myombo forest in general.

I have had occasion to observe the effects of this drug, almost day by day, on a young fellow in my service, a Yao, who had resolved to marry, native fashion, a pretty young widow, who was somewhat older than he. Awad would, of course, never have told me that he was drugging himself, but he was betrayed to me by the man who was providing him with the stuff. The effects of the drug on the lad were remarkable indeed. For several days he appeared to be in a kind of waking trance, like Mrs. Gamp, walking about with a stiff, extended neck, a fixed stare, and uttering a kind of *sotto-voce* recitativo. This state was interrupted from time to time by intermezzos of buoyant gayety! After about a week he completely lost his memory; when I sent him to deliver a message he sat down in front of the house; and when I followed him there about half an hour later he had delivered no message, totally unconscious of the fact that the person to whom the message was sent sat not five yards away from him. He had forgotten all about it. Shortly afterward we parted company, by mutual consent.

The native pharmacopœia, though exercised with superstitious practices, comprises many efficacious remedies for all kinds of diseases; and when the time comes for it to be investigated thoroughly and extensively, it will probably add some invaluable and quite unforeseen data to our own store of medical knowl-

edge. Native doctors are notoriously reticent. For years, in German East Africa, Europeans have tried in vain to find out the remedy of the Wahehe tribe against syphilis — a cure which, at least as far as all outward symptoms are concerned, is wonderfully effective. Doubtless there exist, among native tribes, secret medicines about which we know nothing at all.

Awad, one morning, came to me and told me in a casual way that his wife had been bitten in the foot by a snake. I asked him if the foot was swollen and he said yes. Thereupon I hastily prepared a strong solution of potassium permanganate, which I handed him with a spoonful of crystals, after I had given him minute directions. A couple of hours later, to my indignation, I found him playing cards with my boys. I told him to rush off to his wife and apply the medicine, as otherwise it might be too late; and he went away without hurry and without comment. When I met him again a few days later I asked him how his wife was getting on, and he replied that she was quite all right. I asked him if he had applied the potassium permanganate. He said: "No; I have not; it was not necessary; a man whom I know went into the forest and got some herbs; these he chewed, and then he let the saliva drop into the wound made by the serpent's teeth, and she soon recovered."

Occasionally, and by chance, one hears hints which give much food for speculation.

One striking instance may be mentioned. Speaking about the spirillum fever-tick, the authors of *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia* say: "An interesting point — though, unfortunately, one that can-

not be vouched for — is that some of the Angoni have, by repeated attacks in generation after generation, become immune. To preserve this immunity when traveling, and with the idea of imparting immunity to their friends, they are said to carry these home-bred ticks with them, from place to place.” This statement, to which the writers themselves do not appear to give too much credit, apart from sounding fantastic, is also, so far as the tame tick’s action is concerned, rather obscure. But the fact of domesticated ticks being taken along like household pets by people going on a journey finds an interesting confirmation, unknown, I think, to the authors just quoted, in a book which was written in the reign of Queen Anne, the *Journal* of Robert Drury, the Madagascar slave, attributed by some to Defoe. He tells exactly the same story about one of the Madagascar tribes and their ticks or bugs, which must have been the identical spirillum ticks.

The expression “cowardly native” is a household word among Europeans in Africa, and yet instances of courageous actions of natives, such as, to my knowledge, no white man ever performed, are innumerable. The reason for this entirely unmerited reputation probably lies in the fact that, as a rule, they are not in the least ashamed to admit that they are or that they have been afraid, while a white man, unless he is a recognized hero, will die rather than make such an avowal. Another reason, no doubt, lies in their many idiosyncrasies and the superstitious awe with which perfectly harmless things inspire them. Almost all the natives, for instance, from the Indian Ocean

to the lakes, fear chameleons much more than they fear snakes.

It is very common to hear travelers complain about the cowardice of native followers, who, when the caravan was charged by a rhino, threw down their loads and fled. I should like to know what else, in the name of common sense, they ought to have done — sat down and awaited developments? Native experience of wild animals and their ways is far more extensive and thorough than ours, and, as a rule, they behave, in an emergency brought about by an encounter with wild animals, in a perfectly rational manner, based on a knowledge of that particular creature's habits. They will run away from a rhino and jump aside, well aware that its impetus will carry it past. But they know better than to run away from elephants. I have seen natives, under a charge of these, lie down and remain motionless on the ground, knowing that the short-sighted giants would mistake them for logs and step over them. I have seen Wataveta killing elephants with bows and arrows. There were a lot of men, it is true; still, their audacity was marvelous; they were like king crows. The same people also hunt elephants by hamstringing them and then finishing them off with spears.

Not many years ago, an English officer in Uganda, who had been seized by a lion, was rescued by his own native servant, who beat the animal off with a whip of hippo hide; and a little later, in German East Africa, a German officer whom I personally knew was saved in the same way by an askari, who,

afraid to shoot, drove the lion away with the butt-end of his rifle.

A missionary told me how, in Kondeland, an unarmed native saved a little girl who had been seized by a lion. The latter was playing with the child as a cat plays with a mouse, carrying her in its mouth for a few yards without hurting her, then putting her down and moving away to some distance, to sit down and watch. The native picked up the child and walked slowly backward, step by step, stopping dead still whenever the lion made a rush, and so at last reached a place of safety. I know of several instances when natives have beaten off adult leopards with cudgels, and in the great lion-infested plains of East Africa, the killing of lions with spears by natives, as was done by Malikanoi's young son, is by no means uncommon.

When the Masai, bravest and most romantic of natives, walk through the Nyika alone at night, and become aware that lions are near, they sit down and pull their mantles over their heads. They assert that no lion in the open attacks a motionless man whose face he cannot see. The lion, they tell me, will press the claws of one of its forefeet on the sitting man's instep; if he moves, he is lost. But if he bears the pain without stirring, the lion leaves him. The hunting offshoot of the Masai people, the Wandorobo, who roam through the Nyika in search of game as the Redskins roamed through the American prairie, never sleep in their huts, — temporary shelters meant to last but a few days, — but always in the open, between the huts, and without fires. They declare

that no wild beast has ever carried one of them away at night.

Where crocodiles abound, natives, in accordance with the saying that familiarity breeds contempt, grow exasperatingly foolhardy, women as well as men, and frequently have to pay the penalty of their imprudence. Relations between the natives and the crocodiles, however, are of a complicated and even mysterious nature. Some wear charms against the monsters, in which they implicitly believe; and I must admit that I have never heard of any one of them coming to grief. Also, there undoubtedly are crocodiles that are not man-eaters, although the common assertion that crocodiles that get plenty of fish will not eat man falls flat before the many casualties on the great lakes, which teem with fish. A curious phenomenon is, that there are well-defined stretches in several East African rivers where the crocodiles are perfectly harmless, while above and below these sanctuaries no one, except the above-mentioned bearer of charms, can enter the water with impunity.

Some fifteen years ago I accompanied Lieutenant W——, of the battalion of the King's African Rifles stationed in Jubaland, on a trip up the Juba River, in the flat-bottomed government steamer which was then, besides native dugouts, the only means of communication on that river. The steamer had to be made fast to the shore every night; and one morning we stopped near a village called Ali Sungura ("Ali the rabbit") after its chief. There was at that time living on the Juba a famous wizard, who was looked upon as a sort of paramount chief of all the crocodiles

in Jubaland, the which, so it was said, on certain nights of the year, repaired to his hut en masse, to hold a "baraza."

On the morning after our arrival in Ali Sungura we walked ashore, where we were greeted by the chief, whom we asked if the wizard was there. He said that he was not; and, pointing to a man standing near him, he added, "This is his son."

My companion asked the young fellow if he, too, was immune against crocodiles.

Thereupon the chief pointed to a creek, about two hundred yards in width, and extending some way inland. "He swims through here every day," he said. "He works on the other side."

We looked, and saw near the opposite shore the eye-knobs of many crocodiles protruding from the water. We then asked the wizard's son himself if the chief had spoken the truth and, on his replying in the affirmative, we asked him further if he would swim through now for a rupee. To this he readily assented, and we asked Ali Sungura if it was really safe.

Ali Sungura laughed and declared that there was not the slightest danger. So we promised the man his rupee, and he, after fastening tight around his body the white cloth he was wearing, immediately walked into the water, while Lieutenant W—— cocked his rifle and stood ready to shoot.

The wizard's son soon got out of his depth and took to swimming. He swam toward the opposite side, deliberately, without displaying any hurry and right across the school of crocs, some, but not all,

of which dived on his approach. He scrambled ashore, and, after a short rest, came back the same way. He took his rupee with obvious pleasure.

The chief, Ali Sungura himself, had the reputation of being a "mchawi," or wizard, specializing as a werewolf. According to rumor, he was in the habit of walking about at night in the shape of a hyena, and of doing, in this disguise, as the hyena does. The old superstition, that certain people have the power to assume the shape of some animal, is as widespread in tropical Africa as it is in other parts of the world; and the natives of a village can be very positive and quite convinced when they assure you that such and such a lion, or such and such a leopard, is not really an animal, but a mchawi, who is in the habit of taking its shape.

Not long ago, in Nyasaland, I asked an old Yao, who had just returned from Fort Johnston, if the lions had made themselves very unpleasant there of late. He replied that only one had committed depredations, and even killed people, but that he was known to be a mchawi. He added: "They have caught the man; they will take him to the Resident."

"And what will happen to him?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing," he replied with a sigh, "they will do nothing to him; the English always want to *see* everything," putting the emphasis on the word "see."

I said to myself that it was rather fortunate for that were-lion that the English always want to "see everything."

That there exists, principally in the region of the great lakes, a category or class or sect of people who

habitually indulge in satisfying a perverse inclination to feed on the flesh of human corpses is an indisputable fact, to which several administrators and explorers have borne testimony. I need mention here, chosen from many others, only Sir Harry Johnston, Mr. J. F. Cunningham, and Mr. Dutkewich, in his contribution to Mr. Peter Macqueen's book, *In Wildest Africa*. The best known are the Bachichi, an organized secret society on the Sese Islands in Lake Victoria, who have for many years occupied the authorities. But they are by no means isolated. I am inclined to think that in other parts of tropical Africa, where these ghouls occur, they, too, form a fraternity among themselves. This is undoubtedly the case in Buanji, at the northern end of the Livingstone Range, where they are known as Niambuddas. These, however, according to native report, differ from their colleagues in other countries by the sinister detail that they kill, and then season in a pool of water, those whom they have selected as their victims and decoyed with all the artifices of a thug. In Buanji, no man dares at night to go however short a distance from the camp or village by himself, while across the boundary, in Ukinga, the same man will walk about alone at night, with as little fear as if it were day.

The Bachichi and other corpse-eaters dig out the bodies of people who have died a natural death, and then eat them. They may, otherwise, be perfectly harmless members of the community. In Nyasaland a corpse-eater is called a mchawi, although that is really the Swahili name for wizard. Here, unless

otherwise explained, the first interpretation is always that of corpse-eater. As in the case of the were-carnivores, so in this latter case, — but here, I am afraid, with more justification, — public opinion always pretends to be accurately posted concerning the identity of the mchawi. Although feared and treated with a measure of respect, they are not always demonstratively shunned. I know of one case in which a whole village transported its penates half a mile away from the hut of a mchawi, after it had burned to the ground all its own dwellings. The occurrence that gave rise to this wholesale desertion was, so I was told by the people themselves, that some time after the death and burial of one of the mchawi's two wives, the second one ran away, giving as a reason that, the night before, her husband had brought back into the hut the lifeless body of the deceased. Perhaps a friendly neighbor, who did not weigh overmuch, had helped in a stratagem to get rid of the runaway. But the man's little boy also ran away; he said that his father kept him walking about all night, and that he could not stand the fatigue. He never went back to his old home to stay. I knew the whole family, and met them often. The mchawi married a third wife, who, as long as I knew her, appeared to be perfectly content and happy; but then, people say that she shares her husband's tastes. Be all this as it may, Ndalawisi — such is the man's name — had undoubtedly *le physique de l'emploi*: bloodshot eyes, lantern-jaws, and a large mouth with protruding yellow fangs and visible gums.

All the men who have been pointed out to me as

corpse-eaters have the same type of visage, and it is quite possible that many an innocent man owes his evil reputation only to the fortuitous shape of his face.

Weird and frightful legends have been woven by folklore around these creatures. One thing, however, is certain: natives, when brought in contact with corpses and putrefaction, do not feel the same horror that we do. A bright, intelligent young fellow once asked me, in a matter-of-fact way, if I had never tasted a corpse. To my indignant protest, "The smell alone is sufficient to drive a man away," he replied, "No, the smell is very pleasant." And on another occasion I was asked quite seriously if, among the many tinned stuffs brought into the country by Europeans, there is not also tinned human meat.

This total indifference to the smell of putrefaction and the contact with it had fostered awful customs among the Sakalawas on the southwest coast of Madagascar before the French Government stopped — or tried to stop — them by legislation. Corpses were kept exposed for weeks above-ground before burial, the length of the period of exposure depending upon the rank of the individual. Even when you were camped a mile away from the village, the odor, when the wind blew your way, made a continued stay impossible. Dead chiefs were carried in state from village to village for months, and in each village were kept exposed for weeks on a wooden platform; Bacchanalian revelries went on as long as the visit lasted, and it was a common thing for the young men, at the height of the festivities, to go and stand under

the platform and rub all over their bodies the liquid matter which oozed from the corpse and trickled through the planks.

Not only the dead, but death itself seems not to inspire the Sakalawas with any terror. Their burial rites are of the merriest, and anybody unacquainted with the customs of that nation would be convinced, on first witnessing the approach of a funeral cortège, with its gay music, its bullock-cart decorated with bunting, shining pieces of metal, and small mirrors, that it was a nuptial party. Again, suicide by one of the many deadly poisons that abound in every thicket of that island, where, as in Ireland, venomous snakes do not exist, is resorted to quite as a matter of course, on the least provocation, even by children when they have been scolded by their parents.

Nearly all natives, including most of the Moham-medan tribes, are, with the exception of the Somali and the warrior castes of the Nilotic tribes, passionately addicted to drink. There is much truth in what has been written: that the whole population of tropical and subtropical Africa is drunk after sunset. Many kinds of fermented liquor exist, some of which are very palatable, as, for instance, the honey-beer of the Wataveta, or a kind of champagne that the Wabena produce out of the sap of a bamboo, which, curiously enough, refuses to yield its precious liquid when it is transplanted from its own country. At the time of year when this sap is collected, both men and women drink it to excess, until they fall down senseless near their fires. I have been shown in Ubena many little children who had been badly burned be-

cause their mothers had collapsed too close to the fire, and many grown-up persons who, being unable from drunkenness to crawl back into their huts, had been shockingly mutilated by hyenas.

“Pombe” — beer made either from bananas or from maize and millet — is the curse of the African native. Entirely unable as he is by constitution to resist temptation, he drinks as long as the state of his finances and the existing provisions permit. It has always seemed to me as if the effects of intoxication on a native were different from what they are on a European. They may be similar when he gets hold of whiskey; but they undoubtedly differ in cases of drunkenness produced by pombe. In a native who has got drunk on pombe, the effect is none the less violent because it is less apparent in the beginning. Its climax is reached some twenty-four to thirty-six hours after the libation has ceased, and manifests itself in a nervous irritability which often leads to disastrous consequences. Some individuals in this state, although sober to all appearances, become a grave danger to their neighbors. It was in this condition, as I have been informed on good authority, that the Police askaris in a certain East African colony committed all those wanton acts of cruelty which created such a sensation in Europe a few years before the war. One need not go very far, perhaps, to recover the recipe for the famous drink of the Order of Assassins.

It is probable that the shortness of memory with which most natives are afflicted to quite a remarkable degree as regards things which do not touch them

directly, is due in part to this racial vice and in part to the abuse of the elixirs mentioned above. This deficiency of memory is a palpable evil, not, I think, sufficiently recognized as such by those who employ natives, and is the source of many mistakes and accidents that are attributed to culpable neglect or evil intent. The very tone of voice in which a native says, "Nimesahau" (I have forgotten), implies that, for him at least, to forget is a conclusive excuse, which precludes all possibility of guilt and desert of reproach. Very frequently they do not remember what they have said a few minutes before; they will give you half a dozen different names in succession for the same mountain or river, and look quite surprised when, glancing at your notebook, you tell them that they have given you an entirely different name a little earlier in the day. This weak memory, added to the difficulty which, like Darwin's aborigines of the Terra del Fuego, even comparatively civilized Negroes have in "understanding the simplest alternative," is the chief obstacle that travelers encounter to getting correct information. And yet, — another anomaly, — African Negroes are the greatest linguists on earth.

It has happened to me, not once only, but repeatedly, that I have come among a tribe accompanied by men who had never heard its idiom; and, before a month was over, they were, without a single exception, able to converse fluently with the inhabitants, and that even when that particular language differed from their own as much as does English from Italian.

But not that only; although I speak very indifferent Swahili, — a language which it is very easy to

learn to speak badly, and almost impossible for an European to learn to speak faultlessly, — new servants who entered my employ learned to speak it in a few weeks simply by my talking to them. That they learned it from me was quite evident from the fact that they acquired all my mistakes! This facility in learning new languages is, perhaps, connected with the extraordinary mimetic power of natives, which Darwin also mentions with regard to Kaffirs as well as Fuegians and Australians.

Besides their facility in learning new languages, Negroes also have a remarkable gift for communicating with each other by signs. I have often been astounded to notice how all the inhabitants of a village, including the children, were able to converse fluently with a deaf-mute. A few signs with the lips and the fingers were sufficient to convey the meaning of a long sentence, and the mute did not seem to be in the least inconvenienced by his inability to enunciate words.

It would appear as if, in the different colonies of East and Central Africa, very few natives belonging to the households of Europeans speak the latter's language. This apparent ignorance, however, is open to doubt. It seems curious that "boys" who are not supposed to understand a word of English or Portuguese should constantly be caught listening to their employers' conversation; and that vital secrets, exchanged between two Europeans, in the presence of natives who, when addressed directly in their master's language, reply only with a vacant stare, should, within twenty-four hours, inevitably become

public property. Natives are as inquisitive as they are incapable of keeping a secret. The latter is a fortunate evil. Were Negroes able to hold their tongues, there would not be a white man alive in Africa to-day.

Of course, the inaccuracies in the statements of Negroes are, in the majority of cases, due to deliberate lying. But sometimes they are unpremeditated and unintentional.

It is extremely difficult to find, in native statements, the line of demarcation between deliberate falsehood, lapse of memory, and a congenital inability to distinguish accurately between the real and the unreal. They all lie, all, without a single exception, though in various degrees, and they themselves know and sometimes admit it; and I have met one, at least, who expressed to me, with apparently genuine feeling, his regret for this hereditary defect. The average native does not appear to see any fundamental difference between reality and imagination — a point of view for which, if they only knew it, they could find a measure of justification in the writings of more than one philosopher.

For their lies, they have the funniest excuses. Some time ago I missed one of my men, and when I inquired after him, I got, from a lad named Mohamad, the answer: "He has gone into the forest to dig for medicine."

"What is the matter with him?" I asked.

"He has great pains in his head and stomach."

Sometime later, Wasi — that was the absent man's name — came back, carrying firewood, and when I

asked him why he had not told me that he was ill, he was very much surprised. There was absolutely nothing the matter with him. I then soundly rated Mohammad for telling such lies, when my head-boy interfered by saying in a conciliatory tone, "He did not lie, master. He said it only to make conversation."

Native logic runs in grooves different from ours, often in an exactly contrary direction. When I listen to their arguments, I am often reminded of Leonardo da Vinci's famous reversed drawing of the castle of Amboise. On one occasion, one of my boys told me that another boy had told him something, which, although a matter of small importance, he was not supposed to communicate to others. I taxed this other boy with having betrayed my confidence, but he flatly denied having spoken. I confronted them both, and a friendly dispute ensued, which led to no result. I then said to the boy who, according to the other, had spoken without leave, "Why are you not angry with Soliman for telling such a lie about you?"

He smilingly replied, "No, I am not angry. Why should I be angry? He lied. If he had spoken the truth, *then* I should be angry."

II

FOLK AND FOLK WAYS

IT is often said about the Negro that, unlike the Red Indian, he is apt rapidly to forget both a kindness and an injury. As to the latter, I have my doubts. I have known cases when natives nursed their resentment for many years, apparently quite oblivious of the injury inflicted; and then, when the opportunity and the probability of impunity offered themselves, struck with a vengeance. As regards the reproach of habitual ingratitude, it must be said that natives do not always look on treatment experienced from Europeans as the latter themselves do, and often take as their due, or as a condescension on their own part, what the latter fondly imagine to have been an act of kindness, condescension, or generosity. It has repeatedly occurred in the interior, to me as well as to others, that natives, after they had been successfully treated for some ill, came and claimed their reward.

Another circumstance that helps to explain the Negro's indifference regarding kindness received is that all native races, without exception, look upon the white man as a usurper, who has robbed them of their country; although the common people — not, of course, the chiefs — admit, as far, but only as far, as the British are concerned, that they are better protected now than they were before. Still, they all feel that a grievance exists, and many of them look

upon anything for their relief or comfort that Europeans do, only as a small part-payment of a debt.

But manifestations of gratitude do occasionally occur, mostly on the part of children, who are probably instigated to them by their mothers. Many years ago, a little Swahili boy in the hospital in Zanzibar, to whom an orange was brought, handed it back and begged that it should be given to the kind lady who had put medicine on his sore eyes. In British East Africa I once, without the slightest danger to myself, rescued a little boy from drowning. A month afterward he appeared in my camp with a dozen eggs, for which he refused to be paid. He must have collected them one by one, for they were all rotten!

Negroes do not feel as we do, or, if they do, they show their feelings in a different way. I once had a Kikuyu servant, an excellent fellow, named Tairara. We were camped for some time in the Mveli hills, in the Sayidie province of British East Africa, and the village, a market-place, was periodically visited by Waduruma and Wanyika, who came from a considerable distance, to get, by barter, what articles they required. Tairara had already spoken to me about one of his sisters, who, years before, had been kidnapped from her native country and taken to the coast. And one day, sure enough, just as in a story-book, the two met in the principal street of Mveli. The emotion of Tairara was genuine and violent and, I must say, most affecting. He sat on the ground, holding with one hand the hand of his sister, who was standing near him, while, with the open palm of

his other hand, he kept beating the ground; and, all the time, tears were streaming from his eyes. The sister showed much less emotion. She looked, if anything, rather embarrassed.

Well, I left them in this position. What followed, however, was the curious part of it. From that day onward they took no more notice of one another than if they had been strangers! I saw them pass each other a week or so later without exchanging even a word; and when I asked Tairara how that was, his reply was to the effect that they had now met, and that the incident was closed.

No native, I think, would hesitate to indorse the opinion of Bernard Shaw's charming heroine, Miss Lydia Carew, when she coldly remarks that "grief of two years' duration is only a bad habit." To the native, there is a time for grief and a time for pleasure, which may alternate without transition. Also, natives are, I believe, able to produce emotion at will; at least, the women are. At the wakes after the death of a relative or acquaintance, their wails are accompanied by genuine tears; yet both before and after, they are absolutely unconcerned, as if nothing had happened.

Ties of affection are strongest between mother and child, setting aside the transitory attachments of paramours. They are deep and lasting, and, in some tribes, manifest themselves in a touching way. Among the Wabuanji and Wakissi, for instance, the son, even when he is grown up, when he encounters his mother, steps aside and kneels down, and in this attitude waits until she has passed. I remember how

once, when I was walking in Buanji with a great chief, he suddenly left my side and knelt down near the path, until his old mother, who was coming our way, and who might have stood for a portrait of "She" after her second baptism of fire, had passed without taking the slightest notice of him or me.

What a difference between this beautiful custom and that ruling among those dreadful Sakalavas of Madagascar! There every woman, as soon as she has reached the great climacteric, is degraded to the state of village idiot, becomes the butt of children's practical jokes, is forbidden the entrance of the house, fed on refuse, and never spoken to except in rough accents, even by her own children; whereas the old men receive every attention.

I once ventured to remonstrate on that subject with a beautiful young mulatto woman, much courted by Europeans, whose white-haired old grandmother was even then living in that miserable status. "In my country," I said, "old women are treated with particular respect and consideration by all people alike, men and women and children. The older a woman is, the more respect we consider her to be entitled to."

To which the heartless young person replied pertly: "Well, that is the custom in your country — and the custom in our country is different, you see."

But that was twenty years ago, and, perhaps since then the innumerable missions scattered along the Mozambique Channel may have succeeded in changing this disgusting state of affairs.

On the whole, I am inclined to believe that the

feelings of East and Central African natives are deeper than we think. Cases of the most passionate and romantic love occur, sometimes with a tragic ending. Some years ago, I brought down with me into the Shire highlands, a Ngoma from the north of the lake, whose name was Barbarossa. The Wangoma are notorious for their intelligence, their pride, their cunning, and the violence of their character; and Barbarossa was no exception. He left behind him a wife and two little children — a circumstance that did not prevent him from soon forming a new tie in the Shire.

The object of his attachment was a lady of ample charms, a widow, with two little children and some means. She had obviously lived much among Europeans, dressed Swahili fashion, and was, in her way, quite a swell. I fancy it was this that took so strong a hold of Barbarossa's imagination; he had been a naked savage when he first came to me.

I did not encourage this liaison, as I wanted him to go back to his family; and I looked upon it as a passing flirtation only, until, one day, I happened to speak to him about his return home, when he emphatically declared that he would never again leave the Shire highlands and his new love.

I remonstrated, reminding him of his poor wife and children.

His reply was: "But don't you know that with us, when a man leaves his country, his brother takes over his family? My wife and my children are now living with my brother."

I believed that this infatuation would cool down in

time, and, in the meanwhile, I discouraged as much as possible the visits to his mistress, who lived about four miles away, in the village of a chief who was supposed to be her brother. In time she became pregnant, and then followed the catastrophe. She died in childbed, and that beast of a chief did not send a messenger to inform Barbarossa of her death until after she had been buried.

For two days the poor fellow looked absolutely crushed, and then recovered so rapidly from his grief, to all appearances, chatting and laughing just as before, that I thought that here was another example of native shallowness of feeling. I was mistaken. Three days later, during a heavy downpour of rain which deadened all sounds, he hanged himself in his hut, which stood not a hundred yards from my own.

I decided that he must be buried alongside the woman whom he had loved so much, and dispatched a messenger to the chief to inform him that I would send up the body for burial as soon as I should have got the eight carriers required, whom I was expecting. But before they had arrived, my messenger came back in breathless haste, to say that the chief and the villagers refused to allow Barbarossa to be buried in their burial-ground, because he did not belong to the same tribe. I sent back word to say that I should use force if they persisted in their refusal, and at last they gave way and the two now lie side by side.

I intended to adopt the baby, who was then still alive; but it followed its parents into the grave a few weeks later, because, so I was told, its foster-mother's milk did not agree with it.

The refusal on the part of the chief to let Barbarossa be buried alongside his mistress, because he did not belong to the same tribe, is significant of the native clannishness, which cannot have been exceeded by the particularism of the small German principalities before 1870. Although it undoubtedly has its disadvantages, both for the administrator and the missionary, the fact that in it lies the chief European safeguard for the future is so obvious that all attempts to "educate" the native out of it ought to be made punishable by law.

In East and Central Africa, the exchange of children for food in periods of dearth is a common transaction; and, heartless though this kind of bargain appears to be, it must be admitted that it is one by which both sides profit. Besides, in my own experience, the children, after years have passed since the famine, frequently return to their old home of their own accord.

In Ukinga, until a few years ago, not always under the stress of hunger, children were sold to lake-shore dwellers for a basket of fish each, but the distance from the range to the lake is in reality so small, that the sale really only amounted to sending the child to the lake to be taught to fish and row, and accepting a basket of fish in celebration of the occasion.

It was, of course, quite different in the old days of slavery, when children thus sold had to follow their new masters to the coast. Mr. Giraud, a French naval officer, who visited the lake region in the early eighties, relates how disgusted he was with a mother who, after she had sold her little girl to a trader from

the coast, turned round, without the least sign of emotion, and went her way without once looking back. He says that he intended to buy back the child and return it to its mother; but that the latter's callousness deterred him from doing so. I am not certain that the poor woman did not feel a great deal more than Giraud gives her credit for. He expresses equal disgust with the child, because it was soon laughing and playing with another child. Perhaps the tears came at night.

Although natives are capable of forming strong ties of affection or love, it is quite impossible to deny, on the other hand, the truth of the assertion that they are, like the man in the *Christmas Carol* who had lost his heart, incapable of feeling pity for suffering fellow creatures, man or beast. They never volunteer to lend a hand for the necessary functions around a sick-bed. Many a time, sick people, even children, could not be brought to my camp from ever so short a distance, because there was not one among the idle adults who surrounded them who would consent to bring them; and the same thing happened when a sick man's hut had to be cleaned, or an ointment applied. Among the Wayao, the most grasping of all the tribes with which I am acquainted, a traveler, surprised by a heavy shower of rain, and seeking shelter, not inside, but under the overhanging roof of a hut, unless the owner happens to be a relation, is mercilessly chased away unless he agrees to pay as much, sometimes, as sixpence.

The death of a European master, even if they appear to be attached to him, does not seem to affect

Negroes in the least. As a rule, they avoid, when they can, being present at the deathbed of a master, — particularly when within reach of an authority, — because they are afraid of inquiries. I myself, when down with fever, have twice been deserted by “boys,” who thought that my last moment had come.

But they do not go far when a harvest is expected. The late H. Hyde Baker, that great hunter, a nephew of Sir Samuel Baker, told me that once, when he was lying ill with fever and apparently unconscious in his tent in the wilds, he heard his devoted servants, who were squatting just outside his tent, settle how they would divide among themselves their master’s spoils as soon as he died, the one to get the watch, another this, another that. And yet, although strict, Baker was a generous master.

But the master, to the Negro, is only the source of food, and nothing beyond that. I remember how once, in the Pare Mountains, when I was walking along a steep incline, followed by one of my servants, I happened to slip. He uttered an exclamation of anxiety. I looked back, gratified about his concern for my person, and the faithful creature said: “Who will feed me if you fall down there?” This child of Nature was nothing if not frank. Once he commented upon a golden tooth I am afflicted with. “Aha!” I said, “you would like to cut my head off while I sleep, and run away with that tooth!”

“Oh! master,” he replied, “who could do such a thing now, with so many police askaris about!”

But it must be said, in justice to them, that natives do not look upon death in the same light that we do. I

have heard men who were suspected of having sleeping-sickness discuss the eventuality eagerly and with a great show of interest, entirely as if they had been talking, not about themselves, but about strangers.

Natives, as is well known, are admirable mimics and, during the war, imitations of people dying and being killed were a great feature, and, I regret to say, a great source of amusement, in the villages. On one occasion I witnessed the representation, to an audience made up of all the people in my camp, of the bayoneting of a man. The actor was an invalided askari, who had entered my service a short time before. First, one cut downward from the left, then another in the same direction from the right, then one upward, from the left; and then a terribly realistic imitation of the death-rattle. The audience was delighted; my cook, the brute, laughed so much that he had to lie on the ground.

It is not to be expected that people who are so indifferent to the sufferings of man should be actuated by softer feelings in their attitude toward the animal kingdom. In general, they do not go out of their way in order to inflict pain, but they are completely indifferent to the sufferings of animals, and they all delight in killing. It really does appear as if the witnessing of the transition from life to death in another creature gave the savage a peculiarly gratifying sensation. Where they commit acts of cruelty, they are generally meant as reprisals of a wholly irrational and wanton kind; as for instance, when they cut off the beaks of birds which they have caught feeding on their fields; or when they pull out the tongue of a live chameleon,

for no other reason than because chameleons frighten them; or when they hang dogs which have committed a larceny. Negro children, I think, are not naturally so cruel as the children of Europeans, although they, too, enjoy walking about with a miserable little bird fluttering on a string fastened to its leg, as does the son of Rubens in his father's famous picture.

Unfortunately, the generality of Europeans do not find it worth their while to try to teach the native to exercise a little kindness toward his dumb brethren, and sometimes, alas, they are themselves the very pioneers of cruelty toward animals. Years ago, when I was living in a part of British East Africa where settlers were still conspicuous by their absence, and the aborigines still almost untouched by civilization, there appeared a taxidermist who collected small mammals for a great museum, and the parasites of small mammals for a private gentleman — a happy combination.

Up to then, in that locality, I had not seen a single act of cruelty to animals committed by young or old, although, or possibly because, the inhabitants were fearless hunters of wild beasts. But this state of affairs was now changed, almost at a moment's notice. All the little boys and some adults were called, rewards were lavishly promised, and the chase began. Whoever has read records of naturalists in both hemispheres knows how difficult it is to persuade natives to abstain from wounding or maiming specimens which they bring in. For one intact animal they injure a dozen. There was no exception to this

rule in this instance, and, worst of all, animals not needed, or past repair, were simply refused.

I remember one particularly odious occurrence. Some boys had brought a quantity of live bats, fastened, for convenience of transport, to a string, like the beads of a necklace, the string passing through a hole which had been made in each bat's wings! But the taxidermist had no more use for bats, and refused to take them; and so the lot was simply thrown away by the side of the road — alive and, of course, not untied; for where is the Negro who would take the trouble to untie a knot, unless compelled to do so by necessity?

This will, to some people, appear a small thing only; but who can doubt that that taxidermist has sown a seed which will, in the future, cause much suffering to an incalculable number of living creatures? As he was a peripatetic taxidermist, the place where I met him was only one in a hundred.

To the lover of animals it must also be a matter of great regret that the different commissions on tropical diseases have to use native help when they experiment on animals; for, given the Negro's passion for imitation, and his passion for "showing off" before other natives, one shudders at the thought of what these helpers may be doing after they have returned to their homes.

Although natives love to see animals die, especially mammals, they often omit to take the trouble to finish small wounded animals and birds, and will carry the latter, fluttering and struggling, for miles and miles, to their place of destination. It is pitiful

to know, in this connection, that settlers and explorers who are collecting, either for themselves or to supply museums, in the hope of perpetuating a name otherwise doomed to oblivion, by having it affixed to a new species of animal, are in the habit of sending out fully equipped natives on collecting expeditions, which sometimes last for months at a time. It is all done for the promotion of science, we are told, when we dare to utter a mild word of remonstrance. Many a poor bird or small mammal, which has been carried for half a day, alive and suffering unspeakable torment, if it had the gift of speech, might conceivably, before dying, utter a variant of Madame Roland's famous exclamation at the foot of the scaffold.

One cannot mention the Negro's attitude toward the animal kingdom without speaking about his relations with the "friend of man." It is only after making acquaintance with the pariah dogs of native villages that one fully understands why Moses branded the dog, for ever, as an unclean beast. Except in those regions where he is still used for hunting, when scanty remains of a devoured animal sometimes fall to his lot, he feeds only on nameless offal, and is expected to so. Among some tribes the licking clean of human ulcers is, as in the Old Testament, a recognized and admitted part of a dog's duties. The most startling of the various uses to which he is put, however, exists among the Wangoni, where he has to replace, with his tongue, the baby's morning tub! This is done quite as a matter of course, the mother, sometimes helped by the father, holding the baby, while the dog conscientiously accomplishes his duty.

The babies do not seem to mind it much, and struggle mildly, as babies will do when they object to being washed. Expressions of disgust and indignation on my part, when I first witnessed this performance, were met with undisguised astonishment on the part of the parents.

And those unfortunate creatures breed like rabbits! It is a pitiful sight to see a poor native bitch, reduced to skin and bones, trying to satisfy the ravenous hunger of half a dozen half-grown young gluttons. In many places these curs, hunting either in packs by themselves or with their masters, have entirely extirpated whole species of small mammals. In Buanji, where they were formerly numerous, all the mongooses have been destroyed by the joint voracity of man and dog; and, surely, anyone who has had the good fortune to make the personal acquaintance of a mongoose, not to mention the famous Rikki-Tikki, will admit that one mongoose is worth a hundred native dogs.

Thanks to the greediness of certain Europeans, who do not scruple to sell to chiefs — who will pay almost any price for them — the pups of large European breeds, these nuisances constantly increase in number, size, and strength. The Wahehe, in what was formerly German East Africa, keep their dogs, not only to hunt with, but also as food; and those destined for that fate are prevented from moving about too much by having one of their legs broken!

Natives train their dogs for the hunt with great skill and cruelty. Once, in the Livingstone Range, not many hundred yards from my tent, and before I

could interfere, a native from Buanji, who, with others, had been chasing a reed-buck, cudgeled his dog to death because he considered that he had been slack in the performance of his duty.

One wonders why administrators do not introduce a native dog-tax. It would affect only the well-to-do, and an unmitigated evil would gradually disappear. There would be no necessity for drastic measures, like the marooning of the dogs of Constantinople.

Among the hunting tribes, the men are incredibly swift of foot. I have known them to run down a buffalo, and get it, too. This was in Ubena, which is a hilly country, and the buffalo must have been old, as I tasted of its meat, which was extremely tough. In a flat country, I think, such a feat would have been almost impossible, although I have been told by natives in the great plains of British East Africa that men exist who will run antelopes down.

The pivot around which all native conceptions of life turn is "chakula" (food). To eat as much as he possibly can at one sitting is looked upon by every native as a sacred duty; and, like the dung beetles described by Henri Fabre, he never, never stops, so long as there is anything to eat before him. An American divine, as well known for his beautiful preaching as for his successes with a rifle in East Africa, has told us how a native with whom he remonstrated for gorging himself with the meat of butchered zebras, excused himself by saying that he might be dead by the morning, and then, what an opportunity would have been lost! If you ask a native why he goes and gets married, he never replies: "Because I love the girl";

but invariably by the question: "Who is to prepare my food?"

It is quite useless to try to give natives extras. I often started, but always gave it up again, quite disheartened. The more sugar and tea you give them, the quicker they finish it. They have no conception of husbanding provisions, and are never satisfied or grateful. There are, besides, always a lot of hangers-on; and the servants and porters, who fear retaliation in a moment of penury, simply dare not refuse to share. As one said to me once: "If a man sees that I have got something that he has not got, and if I refuse to give him some of it, perhaps some day, when I am hungry and without food and he has plenty of it, he will also refuse to share."

That the native custom to share all food with everybody present is not, as some may imagine, the outcome of altruism, is amply proved by the heartless attitude toward the diseased and the disabled, where a reversal of the position appears an eventuality too remote to be worth being considered.

Though all natives know how to cook, to a certain point, their palate is absolutely devoid of taste. The great majority will, like Mark Twain's Goshoot Indians, eat anything that the raven and the hyena — which latter, in Africa, stands for coyote — eat or leave.

The variety of the native bill of fare is enormous and, roughly speaking, implies, besides vegetable food, everything that breathes. Not all tribes, however, are so catholic in their taste. Some will look with disgust on what others consider a delicacy, and

vice versa; and Mohammedans will, although they are not by any means strict as regards the ritual, abstain from certain things as long as they have to fear the censure of public opinion. Unfortunately all natives, including Mohammedans, eat all birds, with the exception, in some cases, of birds of prey, or of birds which are fetish, like the ground hornbill. Not even the smallest birds, like nectarines or waxbills, are safe from pursuit — a state of affairs which clamors for legislative interference.

Rats and moles are in great demand among many tribes; some, like the Wahehe, eat dogs; the Wangoni eat cats; the Wangulu, snakes and lizards. Several kinds of caterpillars, both smooth and hairy, are collected in baskets and eaten as a “kitoveo” (relish); locusts and white ants replace in native cuisine our oysters and turtles; and some people are particularly fond of a large, strong-smelling tree-bug.

But if the white man stands aghast before the native articles of diet, the native reciprocates as far as many of our food-stuffs are concerned. Tinned food, especially since the war brought enormous quantities of it into the country, is a source of incessant interest and inquiries. Natives have often expressed to me their wonder at the great variety of things which Europeans eat. One of them could not be persuaded that what he had seen in a tin was not chameleon!

A settler whom I knew in Uhehe once poisoned some wild dogs with strychnine and then buried them. On the following day several men came to him and asked permission to unearth the carrion, in order to

eat it. The settler refused, explaining that the dogs had been poisoned; but they came back in the night, dug the dogs out, and took them away.

Once, in the Transvaal, I opened a tin of *mortadella di Bologna*, and, finding it entirely spoiled, threw it away. A European who was staying with me presently saw my headboy pick up the tin, and, before he could interfere, swallow the contents. We both expected the fellow to die of ptomaine poisoning, but nothing happened; he seemed, if anything, rather more cheerful after, than before, his meal.

I remember that once, when I was camped on the shore of Lake Nyasa, a very large dead fish floated slowly past, poisoning the atmosphere with its effluvium. Suddenly I noticed that several of my men rushed to the landing-place and jumped into a dug-out; and when I asked them what they were up to, the reply was, that they wanted to haul the fish ashore. "What for?" I asked horrified. "Because we want to eat it!" I screamed a peremptory warning and was grudgingly and wonderingly obeyed.

Up to fifteen years ago, in the so-called Kaffir eating-houses on the Rand, native mining boys used to buy, by preference, meat full of grubs. They said it was richer. It really would appear, from these and other instances, as if the digestive organs of wild people were constructed on a model different from ours.

The quantity of food that a single native is able to absorb at one sitting is phenomenal. About twelve years ago, in Taveta, in British East Africa, I once shot a large rhino at a distance of about ten miles

from the old disused house of the Church Missionary Society, where I was living at the time. When I walked back, my gun-bearer ran ahead and called my immediate neighbors, mostly Masai and Wachaga belonging to the mission. I met these people — eight including the gun-bearer — going out to the kill, as I was reaching home. After I had bathed and changed, I sent one of my boys into the next village of the Wataveta, a mile farther back in the forest, to inform them also of my chase, so that they, too, might go and fetch meat for themselves and their families; soon afterward I saw them trooping out, past my house. They passed it again toward evening, returning home, and I noticed that they were not carrying anything except a few pieces of hide. I asked them if they had eaten plenty, and received the despondent reply: "There was nothing left when we arrived." I do not, of course, mean to imply that the first lot of eight natives had eaten the whole rhino in a few hours. But what happened was probably this: they ate, each as much as he could carry inside, and then took away on their shoulders as much as they could carry outside, having first cached the balance. My gun-bearer, a few days later, fell ill with an intestinal disease, from which he died within a month.

Natives do not look upon the appropriating of food-stuffs from Europeans as theft. When caught in the act, they indignantly repudiate the charge of theft. They look upon the food as their due. It is a tribute. Because no one of their race would refuse them part of his provisions if they were staying with him, they think they are entitled to part of the provisions of

the white man; and if he does not give it willingly, they take it. Bernard Shaw's assertion, that "what an Englishman wants, he takes," might much more appropriately be applied to the Negro. This thieving is an institution with which every European has to reckon — a fact to be accepted.

It is a mistake to believe that a native servant in whom you show confidence will try to live up to it. On the contrary, he will, as a general rule, consider your confidence as an invaluable asset in the occasions for pilfering that it will give him. And the women are much greater thieves than the men. They know practically no restraint, and even rob each other incessantly, even of the smallest trifles, or of medicines, bandages, and the like. I have known several cases where natives parted from their wives because they could not keep the latter from stealing.

It is interesting to remember, in this connection, that Sir Harry Johnston mentions the incessant pilferings perpetrated by the askari women as one of the causes of the Sudanese rebellion in the early nineties. England was then engaged in one of her small wars in Equatorial Africa, and the women who had followed the black soldiers committed such depredations among the friendly tribes, that they had to be sent back to Uganda. This their husbands resented, and it was, if not the only, at least the principal cause of the ensuing revolt.

I mentioned that the articles coveted by the women are often mere trifles; but this applies to the men also. It is certainly a fact that nothing is too soiled, too torn, or too insignificant, to find a collector; which

does not, however, mean that natives have not a very keen sense of the value of things. But they are very clever in turning even what has been discarded as totally valueless, to some sort of use. I once gave a native, a carver in wood and ivory by trade, an old disused sweater, not thinking that he would be able to turn it to any account. A few days later he appeared in my camp with a rakish white cap, culminating in a red *cocarde* made of a strip of flannel. This cap was the torn-off collar of the sweater, which had been sewn together on one side, and then decorated with the *cocarde*. Shortly afterward the owner told me that he had found a purchaser for his novel head-gear.

If, as some people pretend, the secret of making poverty endurable — of reconciling champagne tastes with a lager-beer income — lies in abstaining from necessities and indulging in luxuries instead, the Negro undoubtedly has adopted this method. He buys unnecessary trifles — old watches past repair, matchboxes of metal, pencil cases, whistles, motor goggles — at ridiculous prices, while repudiating almost with indignation the suggestion to buy remedies for his own or his own people's use, or a platter or a tumbler for his household. The latter particularity, by the way, presents the greatest obstacle to giving a native any medicine to take home with him. How can one expect a member of a numerous household, in which the only drinking vessel consists of an old condensed-milk tin, to take, every two or three hours a certain number of drops of, say, chlorodyne, diluted in water, apart from the fact that every inhabitant

of the village would insist on tasting the stuff! In this respect, as in some others, the Latin axiom, *Cælum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt*, would seem to apply to the Ethiopian in the same degree as to the European. Has not Booker Washington told us how, in a Negro household in Virginia, which could boast of only a single cup, he found a piano?

This happy-go-luckiness is, perhaps, a manifestation of the artistic temperament. Everybody has seen reproductions of the celebrated drawings of the Kalahari bushmen, but it would be a mistake to imagine that this gift is their monopoly. Often, in countries hundreds of miles apart, I have bought little clay figures of animals, made by children in play, and have always been struck by the astounding accuracy with which the creatures' main characteristics had been caught, however disproportionate the measurements. Among the grown-up people one often finds real artists who represent human beings and animals with equal skill. As an avocation, carving usually runs in families, descending from father to son, several brothers being sometimes employed in the same trade; and the self-manufactured implements which they use are almost as great a subject of surprise as the result produced.

At one time I saw a great deal of one of these carvers in wood and ivory. He was a Yao, called Beeboo — quite a remarkable creature, who might have posed as a sample of the artistic temperament quite as well as any Quartier Latin art student pictured in Murger's *La Vie de Bohême*. His likenesses of animals were extraordinarily lifelike, if occasionally somewhat

out of symmetry; but he also gave free scope to his active imagination by inventing animals with new and grotesque shapes. When trade was brisk, as was the case during the war, he lived on the product of his knife and saw only, and walked about, a haughty and independent swell. When times were bad, he used to work for his livelihood on some plantation or farm, watering flowers or cropping the lawn. It was during one of these periods of penury, when I had given him a job, that I caught him helping himself to my provisions. I dismissed him immediately; but we remained on cordial terms all the same, and he often came into my camp afterward, either to offer me pieces of art for sale or to borrow a shilling.

I once entered his hut, where he was living alone at the time, having just been deserted by his wife — a usual occurrence with him. There was no furniture except his stretcher; but everywhere on the ground stood old oil tins and clay pots filled with decorative plants, flowers, ferns, and low shrubs with berries.

I cannot help thinking that Beeboo, if he had been born in Paris, might have developed into another Rodin, or a male Rosa Bonheur. Born in the Middle Ages, in a cathedral town, he would surely have been a famous gargoyle-sculptor. But he, too, was not free of those aberrations in taste to which I have alluded before. One day he shaved the lower part of his head all round in a circle, and then let the hair on the upper part grow to an enormous length, so that he looked as if he wore a huge helmet of fur, like one of Napoleon's grenadiers. He looked frightful, and I told him so — to his intense delight.

III

THE NEGRO MIND

SOME fifteen years ago a gentleman, an acquaintance of a friend of mine who afterward told me the story, went on an expedition to Karagwe, to the southwest of Lake Victoria. Here he called on the paramount chief, whom he presented, *ad captationem benevolentiae*, with a musical box. It was one of those contrivances, familiar to children of a preceding generation, where sweet melodies are produced by the turning round and round of a handle. The chief, exceedingly courteous as chiefs always are when acute hostility is absent, expressed his gratitude in a dignified manner, and, after listening for a few minutes, apparently well pleased with the beautiful sounds evoked, handed the box to one of his attendants. After an interval spent in conversation on various topics, he gave an order to a slave, who went out and quickly returned with an up-to-date gramophone, which he put down on the mat. And then, during the next half-hour, the traveler was treated to records of Melba, Caruso, de Reszke, *e tutti quanti*!

It is probable that Europeans offering advice, remedies, or instruction to natives undergo many a time, if they only knew it, some experience similar to that of the traveler when he presented his old-fashioned musical box.

Even if they have, so far, invented no machines,

Negroes are just as quick-witted as we are, a statement corroborated by all missionaries. Also, although scientists still differ as to the time of their arrival in the Tropics, it is certain that they had already been settled there for many centuries when the first Europeans put in an appearance. Can we newcomers really tell them about their own countries and the best way to exploit them, anything material that they do not know already, or that they would not have known long ago if they had been interested in the matter? And besides, how much do we know about what they know?

Many owners of plantations between the Juba and the Zambesi have admitted to me that it was neither themselves nor their European employees who were running the show, but their native overseers. The same applies to other departments of life, and it is increasingly so as white settlers grow in number.

That the Negro of tropical Africa is not progressive is due neither to want of experience nor to want of judgment, for he has both, but to his temperament. But the temperament of a race is its sole characteristic which can be altered neither by education nor by legislation, as the peoples of Europe show to this day.

Few things illustrate more clearly the temperamental difference between the black man and the white than the often-quoted fact that natives, when an obstruction in the shape, for instance, of a fallen tree closes one of their paths, never dream of removing the obstacle, but walk around it until they have trodden out a new path, while Europeans would, as

a matter of course, proceed at once to clear the way, regardless of the labor involved.

Whatever has been said and written to the contrary, Central African Negroes have not the ambition to emulate Europeans, although the vanity of some induces them to dress like white men, while others, in their desire for money, will try hard, and often with surprising success, to acquire any art which may bring about this result as quickly as possible. Ambition, however, has nothing to do with this.

European affairs appear to have only a meagre interest for them; what interests them most is to know how many black men there are in Europe, if they have got their wives with them, what kind of work they do, how much money they earn, and what their social position is — on which latter point it does not appear desirable to be too explicit in one's answers. The opinion which the generality of natives have about Europe does not indicate that those who have been in Europe and returned were as much struck by its grandeur as some Europeans believe. The prevalent idea concerning Europe is that it is crowded, that there are a great many houses, that it is very cold, and that there are more diseases there than in Africa; on the latter point they are no doubt correct, a fact which is not altered by the circumstance that the limited number of African diseases so often proves fatal to Europeans.

To nothing do Burns's proverbial verses apply more justly than to the black man's opinion of the white — and perhaps vice versa, although it may be questioned whether the former, with his keen intui-

tion, does not read us much more accurately than we him. Any white man who has spent part of his life among natives must remember shocks of surprise experienced at one time or another when, owing to some hazard, he was suddenly faced with the fact that some slight weakness or fad or even favorite opinion or sympathy of his — things never translated into acts and belonging entirely to the realm of thoughts — had been rightly guessed, and perhaps subtly flattered, by native acquaintances for years, without his being aware of it.

Many a European would be considerably astonished if he knew the opinion which the Negroes around him have formed concerning his person. One very rarely has the chance to watch natives mimicking, with a perfection which no white comedian could surpass, Europeans of their acquaintance. To do so is a revelation which may completely alter all one's ideas concerning them. The improvised comments on Europeans in their songs, when they do not know that they are being listened to or when they think that the listener does not understand their language, may have the same effect.

Natives usually give nicknames to Europeans whom they know. As a rule, these are based on some special characteristic, either physical or moral, or on some peculiar habit, or on an event with which they were connected. Sometimes, also, the name given is merely an adaptation of the real name to their own language. A rather strict English official in Mombasa was called "Maji Moto" (hot water), the name of a vicious kind of tree ant. Oskar Bauman,

the Austrian explorer who was the first to reach the Mountains of the Moon, was called "Bwana Kivunja" (the breaker). The elephant-hunter, Neuman, who committed suicide in London, was known all over British East Africa and Uganda as "Nyama Yangu" (my meat), because he insisted on always packing his meat himself when he was hunting. Another man was known as "Mwalimu" (the teacher), on account of his having prevented a carrier from crushing a beetle, the only other person in those parts who had shown similar prejudices having been a Mohammedan teacher from Zanzibar.

In the days before the war newcomers to East Africa used to be very keen on learning what nickname they had been given, and the wily Wanyamwezi and Wasukuma porters used to take advantage of this curiosity for their own aims by giving, when questioned, such names as they thought might flatter the questioner's vanity. I had several times been told proudly by some young fellow not long out from home, "Oh, my native name is 'Bwana Mzuri,' which means 'fine master.'" I had to repress a smile: I had heard it too often, and wondered what the astonishment of the individual would have been, if he had heard the appellation given him by his followers when he was out of earshot.

Some people think that the many questions which Negroes put concerning Europe are a proof of the interest which they take in it. To me it would rather seem that the very nature of the majority of these queries is a proof to the contrary. Even such natives as could have had, all their lives, the information on

the subject which they wanted, if it had had the least interest for them, put questions which would be excusable only in the wildest savages from the far interior.

One man, for instance, who had for some time belonged to a mission, and who passed himself off as a Christian, asked me if Europe is "in the water." Another, also in Nyasaland, which is wedged in between Portuguese colonies, asked me if the Portuguese "live with the English," and, on my denying this, whether they "live in Europe." Another man asked me if London is "a town or a mountain." Yet the people who put these questions had lived in the midst of Europeans all their lives, and the three of them were Wayao, a tribe famous for its intelligence.

It is probable that natives, in their endless conversations, rarely talk about anything except their own affairs, either private or tribal. Anything that does not bear on these two departments of life is of quite secondary importance to them. Their keenness to acquire manual dexterity originates solely in their desire to earn more money as artisans or as mechanics. Even those who have lived in Europe prefer to return to their own villages, and when there resume their old style of living. Of course, exceptions do occur, but they are rare. I remember a German telling me once that, when he was traveling near Arusha, he met some naked Masai who were driving cattle. One of them saluted him in German and began a conversation in the purest Berlin dialect. He had actually lived in that town for several years.

One would imagine that in a country like Nyasaland, where missions abound, all natives, even those who do not belong to any mission, would by now have learned to distinguish between Christmas and other festivities. Yet this is by no means the case. Every festival, whether it is of a religious or of a secular character, is indiscriminately called a "Christmas." They call a gymkhana a Christmas, and bonfires "Christmas-boxes"!

Although, as stated before, natives are quick at spotting the white man's peculiarities, they rarely bother as to what may be of interest or of importance to him, for the reason that what is of importance to the European frequently is of none at all to them, or vice versa. I have had servants in my employment for months without knowing that they had been on long journeys overland to remote countries which were of the greatest interest to me. Also it repeatedly happens that one starts on a "safari" to some distant place, with porters whom one believes to be strangers to the route one intends to take, until one discovers that a dozen or so of one's men know every inch of the road.

In Nyasaland, during the war, I had in my employ a native servant who in the past had accompanied me on a journey in German East Africa, where he himself belonged. On that journey I had been for some time the guest of a Lutheran missionary in a place called Kidugala. One day, while the war was still going on, that servant came to me with the air of one who has something of importance to communicate, and, after the inevitable preambles, he came out

with the news that he had spent the preceding evening in company with some askaris who had just returned from German East Africa; they had been in Kidugala and brought news from there. And, when he had mentioned this, he started laughing. I was keen to hear about the missionary and his family, and eagerly asked, "Well? And what is the news?" For some time he was unable to speak for laughing, and then, as I became more pressing, he blurted out: "The askaris have eaten up all the chickens, and now there is not one left!" He had got no other news, and it had apparently never entered his head to put any questions about the family.

The most *répandue* opinion about Europeans is, that they are "wakali" (fierce); that the life or death of a native is a matter of indifference to them; and they are not quite so convinced of our honesty as we love to think. A very intelligent Nyanja, who had for some time worked in a European's workshop on a plantation, once spoke to me quite dispassionately, though at great length, about the presents which white men occasionally make to Negroes. The gist of his speech was that these gifts are always either spoiled, or valueless, or useless to the donor — in one word, never given at a sacrifice. It was difficult for me to contradict him — the more so as I had a few days earlier presented him with a Baden-Powell hat which, although still presentable, was slightly perforated at the top.

I have been in colonies before the war, where any man engaged as porter for a caravan was referred to by other natives as having been "caught"; and,

curiously enough, the same expression was applied to children who had joined a mission.

The black man does not look upon himself as being inferior to the white man in consequence of the latter happening to be top dog. Some think that he owes this advantageous situation to his more powerful "medicine"; others, that it is "Amri ya Mungu" (God's will). All are convinced that the white man's firearms are the chief instrument of his success. A German officer, during the Masai war in German East Africa, said complacently to a warrior who had been taken prisoner, "You see how much stronger than you we white men are!" To which the other at once replied, "Give us your firearms and take our spears, and then let us see who wins!"

A M'tahita — of a tribe which lives between Voi on the Uganda railway and Kilimanjaro — once said to me: "Why have you white people brought us money? All the evil comes from that." And on another occasion he asked me, "When the white men have taken all they want out of our country, will they go away again?"

It is significant, also, how rapidly the recollection of Europeans, even of such who have lived for decades in the midst of the same tribe, fades from the latter's memory. One has the greatest difficulty, sometimes, in tracing some man or woman who remembers these individuals. Only rarely have the adults of the time looked upon the sojourn of the stranger as an event in itself of importance sufficient to be mentioned to their progeny, unless it happened to be connected with some event of great public importance. A few

men there have been, or still are, who for this reason have acquired a kind of lasting legendary fame, as, for instance, Livingstone, C. J. Rhodes, Sir Alfred Sharpe, or Sir Harry Johnston. The following incident concerning the last gentleman is an instance of how hazy the notions of the Negro sometimes are.

The Mohammedanism of most Nyasaland natives who follow that creed is only skin-deep. It pleases them to walk about in Ramadan, draped in white clothes, and carrying in their hands a small kettle with water for their ablutions, but as to the Mohammedan religion itself the majority is intensely ignorant. Very few are able to reply to such simple questions as what the Prophet's name was, or his wife's, or why they face the East when they pray. Well, I happened to ask one of these ostentatiously devoted and practising Moslems if he knew the name of the "Mtume" (Prophet), and he replied without a moment's hesitation, and with the triumphant air of the man who is proving to you that he is not the ignorant fellow you take him to be, "Harry!" He was confounding the founder of Nyasaland with the founder of Islam.

On another occasion a zealous young Mohammedan asked me if the Prophet was the Son of God. I denied this and tried to explain. He reflected for a while and then exclaimed: "Ah! 'sowa sowa' (all the same), office-boy!"

Most natives, when asked whether they would like to change places with Europeans, emphatically declare that they would object to it very much.

The Negro's reticence as to his inmost thoughts is so intense that it is very difficult to form any opinion

at all as to the inner workings of his mind, but on rare occasions some accidental remark may, like lightning at night, expose in a passing flash surprising vistas, which leave one wondering what may lie hidden beyond.

Once, when I was standing on a height commanding a splendid view, a Yao who was with me said: "If you pitched your tent here we should all start singing every time we looked at the country. Would not that please you?" On another occasion, on a misty morning, he said: "We are fools to-day, because we cannot see the sun!"

And when, on another day, I asked him why, on certain mornings, he did nothing but chatter and sing, and on others walk about in gloomy silence, he replied: "Because it is not always the same. On some days everything looks white and soft."

Once I mentioned in the presence of a Yao that kitchen-boys always grow fat. He at once replied: "Because they do not think much. People who do not think much always grow fat." The speaker was a man who, before he worked for me, had never worked for anybody else, an analphabet, who spoke only his own dialects and Swahili. He certainly never had heard me quote a word from Shakespeare, nor had he had the opportunity to hear one quoted anywhere else.

Their way of judging the actions of Europeans is often amusing and quaintly correct. Some natives were discussing in my presence the dismissal of his fourth or fifth manager by a planter at the end of as many years. After considerable talk one of them set-

tled the question by saying: "It is like this. He engages them when they are poor, and then, when he sees that they have become 'malidadi' (swells), he says to them, 'Now you have become swells, now you must go!'"

A Yao, who knew of France only the French missionaries, asked me once if all the French wear long beards, and if the whole nation, including women and children, wear "kanzus" (long robes). Then he asked me if the French are rich, and when I wanted to know why he put that question, he said "They always walk slow, and they do not speak much; I think they must be poor."

Another man once said to me: "The Europeans always use half-crowns. I have been thinking a lot about that. Where is the other half? Is that in England?"

The forms in which shyness and bashfulness manifest themselves, even in male adult natives, are one of the most astonishing peculiarities in the Negro's, and in particular the Yao's, character. It is this perverted variety of modesty which prevents grown-up men from giving direct information, putting a direct question, or giving a direct answer.

The following is a typical instance of the shifts in which servants take refuge in order to give you some information without having to undergo the painful ordeal of themselves broaching the subject.

I was walking behind two "boys" of mine, one of whom had been in Zomba a few days previously, when they started talking in a louder voice than usual and in Swahili, which is not their own language.

In the course of this conversation the one who had been in Zomba mentioned, first, that he had seen there Major X and Mr. Y, two gentlemen with whom he knew that I was acquainted, and then he went on to say that he had been in the "Mandala" store, and that he had there seen a lot of bacon. I then asked him, "Why did you not tell me that there is bacon in Zomba?"

To this he replied, "Why, have I not just told Hamiss (the other boy)?"

"Did you tell him because you wanted me to hear?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And when you told him that you had seen Major X and Mr. Y in Zomba, did you say that also because you wanted me to get the information?"

"Yes."

"But why did you tell Hamiss, and not me?"

"Oh — if I had told you like that, point-blank, without talking about something else first, I should have felt 'ningalionna haya' (ashamed)." And he explained further by saying what I knew already: "We black people never say a thing all at once, even among ourselves. We begin to talk about other things, and then we touch on the subject which we have in mind, and the other man asks, and then we say the thing we want to say."

When a leopard has carried away one of your goats, the goatherd will come to you and say: "Master, the goat!"

To which you will probably reply: "Which goat?"

"The black goat with the white legs."

“Where is it gone to?”

“It has not gone anywhere.”

“What is the matter with it?”

“It has been taken away.”

“Who has taken it away?”

“The leopard has eaten it.”

When, on a journey, you meet a man from the country to which you are traveling, and you tell one of your attendants to ask that man for the simplest item of information, there invariably follows an endless and most trying conversation, for no other reason than that it would be an outrage against custom and good taste to put the question simply and have done with it.

To avoid the necessity of having to give a straight answer, a native will always, whenever it is possible, reply by putting a counter-question, which, by provoking others, will finally force the questioner to “tumble” to the truth himself.

This congenital aversion to straight talk also explains why servants, rather than give notice, either introduce yarns about the sudden decease of relatives or, just as often, work up to a dismissal in a masterly fashion, so as to make themselves a nuisance without giving offense.

When you see in a native's face that he wants something — he is past master in mutely expressing things — and you ask him what it is that he wants, he invariably replies, “Nothing,” and then, in the course of conversation, he comes forward with his request as if by accident.

On the other hand, it must be stated that tact

plays a great part in the native's reserve; he has, indeed, infinitely more tact than the average white man, and strictly avoids in conversation all subjects liable to evoke painful recollections or feelings. That people with so much tact are also exceedingly polite follows as a matter of course. The Sultan Mariale of the Washaga once served me with "pombe" in his double-story house on the Kilimanjaro, and I unfortunately broke the tumbler. He immediately seized my hand and thanked me effusively, as if, by breaking the glass, I had conferred upon him an exquisite favor.

To pick up a thing which another man happens to drop is not part of the code of politeness of the native as it is of the white man. But the native who will not pretend the faintest attempt to stoop when you have accidentally dropped your pocketbook or your tobacco pouch at his very feet will, a moment later, when preceding you on a path, suddenly pluck a leaf from a tree and rush ahead to remove, by daintily picking it up, the dropping of a bird!

The Negro's reticence and the difficulty which many Europeans encounter when they try to enter into the spirit of native phraseology, even if they can correctly translate the words, are jointly the cause of much unpleasantness. Some Europeans will persist in giving to words meanings which they never had. There is, for instance, the word "ndio," which, in talking to natives, almost all Europeans, from the Juba to the Zambesi, use as "Yes." But it does not mean "yes" at all. Its correct translation is "So it is." Incessant misunderstandings are the consequence

of this wrong interpretation. For instance, if you say to your cook, "There are no more eggs?" and he replies, "Ndio," he means, "So it is" — that is, that there are no more eggs. But the nine Europeans out of ten who imagine that "ndio" means "yes," will take the reply to be, "Yes, there are," and when they find out afterward that there are none they will tax the cook with lying, and when he swears that he did not lie they will come to the conclusion that he is one of the most obstinate liars they ever met.

That explanations and argumentations of natives always appear to begin at the wrong end may be due to some structural peculiarity of the brain, and that the syntax of the Bantu languages follows on similar lines perhaps derives from the same cause. Thus much confusion is caused from the fact that the object is always made to precede the subject. As an example, the Swahili sentence "Mafaranga wanayakula madudu?" runs, translated into English, word for word, thus: "The chickens (mafaranga) do they eat them (wanayakula) the insects (madudu)?" But the real meaning of the sentence in Swahili is, "Do the insects eat the chickens?" I once put this question where I saw a lot of ants running about among chickens, and received the surprising reply: "Not unless they are dead!" A striking instance of the natives' inverted concept of things is offered, among several tribes, by the substitution of the preposition "ndani" (*Anglice*: inside) to the word "nyumba" (*Anglice*: house). The expression "that man's inside," meaning "that man's house," is very common. Surely, any white man, asked to express the word "house" by a

preposition, would, as a matter of course, call it the "outside," never the "inside."

The general attitude of the black man toward the white is one of profound distrust. To this rule there are two exceptions: British officials are trusted everywhere, and so are the missionaries in long-established missions, where a sort of family relationship between the missionaries and their pupils and followers has in time developed. For their general distrust natives can scarcely be blamed, for in the past they have too often been the prey of unscrupulous speculators — a subject on which many volumes could be written.

One not generally known and rather peculiar way in which this distrust against strangers manifests itself is the care they take to hide their footpaths from a new arrival in their district. This applies chiefly to footpaths in the jungle, on mountain-sides, and in the forest, in districts without settlers. They fear that the traveler might discover something which would induce him to stay. Not until it has become quite clear to them that he means to remain anyhow, do they give up their reticence, occasionally with surprising revelations. But even months after one's arrival one may discover well-trodden short cuts through apparently inextricable wilderness, well known but kept secret by the natives in the neighborhood. A favorite trick is, where native paths through the jungle branch off from a main road, to leave a small patch of jungle standing where path and main road would intersect, if they were allowed to meet, so as to prevent passers-by from guessing at its existence. Very frequently also the inhabitants will swear that,

although paths have existed, they have become impassable owing to the spread of "liquania." As a rule these statements are much exaggerated, but it cannot be doubted that in some places the "liquania" is planted by the natives themselves for the very purpose of creating an obstruction. It may be mentioned here that this plant is a creeper with a pod of beautiful reddish-brown velvet. The slightest touch or breath of wind sends the down of these pods flying, causing unbearable itching where it comes into contact with the skin. The creepers climb trees to any height and in any number.

The most effective safeguard against identification of which the Nyasaland native disposes is the number of names which each man possesses. The name which he bears as a child is dropped at "uniago" (initiation), and to call him by it after this is over is a deadly insult. His father then gives him a name by which he is known in the tribe. Besides this name, he chooses another himself, chiefly to be used in his relations with Europeans. This is the name which in most cases is entered in his pass book at the Residency. Frequently these names are perfectly idiotic, as, for instance, "Whiskey" or "Breakfast" or "Dinner" or "Whiskers," and so on; and they are not always communicated to all the other members of the family.

Once an old man came into my camp and asked for his son, giving a name which I had never heard. After he had, at my request, described the man he was in search of, I came to the conclusion that it must be my cook, who had cooked for me as "Tim" for the last two years, and whose pass book also held

that name. The old fellow had never heard of Tim; but when Tim was called, the two turned out to be father and son, all right.

These names, *ad usum Delphini*, are often changed, sometimes by an employer, when he finds that he already has sufficient bearers of that particular name on his hands, sometimes by the owner of the name himself, occasionally on the spur of the moment, when he is not quite certain of his environment, and thinks that an alibi may eventually prove useful.

Under such circumstances, and given, in addition, the *esprit de corps* which binds all natives together, and their unparalleled skill in disguise and making-up, it seems an almost superhuman task for the police ever to succeed in catching anybody. Yet they are remarkably successful.

Unofficially, natives make, racially, only one sweeping distinction between the fair-haired, fair-skinned, usually somewhat taller Europeans of the North (in which are included the South African Dutch) and the more swarthy and usually smaller-sized Europeans of the Mediterranean basin. The South African mulattoes, whose acquaintance the native of British Central Africa made during the war, were and are still designated by him as "Bushmen."

Although they may have a great deal of tribal patriotism, the Negroes of East and Central Africa are, as subjects of European governments, entirely devoid of patriotism as we understand it, with the exception, perhaps, of some of the askaris. But I imagine that the latter's patriotism is more of the *j'appartiens à mon maître* kind, than sentimental.

During the war I had for a year in my service a Yao from German East Africa, a most amusing fellow. He had been a German soldier and, as such, had been wounded in the right foot, taken prisoner, and cured in an English hospital. As soon as he was cured he enlisted as a British soldier, fought bravely against the Germans, was again wounded, this time in the left thigh, but, fortunately for him, picked up again by the British, cured, and dismissed as an invalid.

He was equally proud of both performances, and was constantly throwing about, true veteran fashion, with his *kompagnie* and his *battalion*, alternately using German and English commando words, mentioning different marches and battles, now on one side, now on the other, all extremely bewildering to the listener, as one never knew whom he happened to be fighting against on each particular occasion. The idea that anybody might see something objectionable in a soldier thus changing sides as in a *quadrille* never entered his head. I understood his idea to be that, with the moment of his being wounded, all moral obligation on his part toward the side on whose behalf he had received the wound came to an end.

As may be imagined, many different versions were current among natives as to the origin of the war between the "Wangreza" and the "Wagermann" or "Wadatshi," the most fantastic explanations being, of course, those which were most readily believed. One favorite and widely spread story was, that the son of the "Sultan" of the English had owned a white

mule, and the son of the "Sultan" of the Germans a black one, that they quarreled over the merits of their respective mounts, and that the war between the peoples followed as a consequence. This explanation shows, by the way, how the contact with Europeans has impressed upon the native mind the importance of sportive issues. Not one who believed this yarn appeared to be in the least surprised that torrents of blood should have been shed in consequence of the two princes' rivalry.

The great bloodshed, however, did not find so universal approval as one might have expected among savage and, for the most part, warlike races. There was another rumor current that, at a certain place, a great many sheets of paper were picked up on the ground, which missives had been thrown from heaven, and on which the iniquity of so much killing was denounced in Arabic, and terrible visitations were prophesied as a retribution. According to the wizards these visitations were to take the form of a fearful heat-wave, by which the Europeans would be forced to take refuge on their ships; lions would infest the whole country; and the natives would be reduced to living in the trees like monkeys!

If natives make scarcely any distinction between Europeans racially and unofficially, those who have had the opportunity to compare different methods of administration in colonies belonging to different Powers distinguish all the more, and it will be a matter of small surprise to those Europeans who have had the same opportunity, to hear it stated that no native race exists which does not prefer British rule,

suaviter in modo if *fortiter in re*, to all others. They feel, even if they express it differently, that the British authorities are *de relation sûre*. Nothing is more distasteful to Negroes than startling innovations, and they know that they are safest from these under the British Government, which, as far as the African native is concerned, "lets well alone" always, and lets sleeping dogs lie, as long as there is not a probability of their getting too dangerous when they wake up.

A Colonial Power with centuries of experience, like the British, would never have committed such a blunder as did the Government of German East Africa, when, a few years before the war, it decreed that all adult male Masai should be earmarked! The Masai were then, as they perhaps still are, cattle thieves as incorrigible as were the Highlanders of the Waverley novels; like the latter, they looked upon cattle-thieving as an honorable profession, and death in its pursuit was to them, as it was to the Highlander, next best to death on the battlefield. In order to put an end to these ever-recurring cattle raids, control of individuals was a necessary condition, and so the German authorities devised a scheme by which every Masai warrior should be registered by means of a tiny metal disc in the top of his ear. There was no cruelty or brutality intended or implied in the application. As a matter of fact, since the end of their rebellions, the Masai had always passed as being petted by the German Government *au détriment* of other native races. The authorities argued, with some show of reason, that to men who are in the habit of

wearing ivory snuffboxes four inches in diameter in their earlaps, an additional tiny metal disc in the top of the ear would either be a matter of indifference or perhaps even be looked upon as an improvement.

But the wizards who devised this plan, if they did not overrate the Masai ear's carrying-capacity, certainly underrated its owner's sense of pride. I was living at the time among the Masai in British East Africa, and I remember how terrible was the indignation of their brethren across the boundary. They said that they were being earmarked like their own cattle, and never forgave the offense — as they amply proved at the outset of the war.

The preference of natives for British rule, although flattering, was, in pre-war days, sometimes a cause of embarrassment to British Colonial Governments. It happened frequently that chiefs whose territory lay near the British frontier, but outside it, crossed the boundary with their household and followers, with the intention to settle in the British colony. One of the most important events of this kind was when, in 1905, the Sultan of the Washaga, Mariale, arrived in Nairobi, where Sir Donald Stewart, the Governor, was then residing, with all his followers. For diplomatic reasons, out of courtesy to its neighbors, the British Government had to discourage these attempts. So it happened in this case also; and Mariale was persuaded, by the joint efforts of Sir Donald and of the German Governor, Count Götzen, who just at the same time happened to pay a visit to his English colleague, to return to the Kilimanjaro.

It is an ill wind that bears no one any good. If

Mariale is still alive, he and other chiefs who encountered the same disappointment may say to themselves that, as far as they are concerned, that most elusive of all elusive proverbs, "Everything comes to him who waits," has for once come true.

IV

FEMINISM IN NYASALAND

FOR several years after my arrival in tropical Africa, while living in the midst of natives, and fully conversant, as I imagined, with their customs and their way of thinking, my heart was filled with compassion for the hard-working and submissive black woman. "What a field," I often said to myself, "for the vindicators of women's rights! Oh! if I could only bring here one of those energetic lady champions! What a storm she would raise in the whole world, until she had set rolling the stone which would, in the end, bring if not entire freedom at least 'relief to these poor and patient creatures!'"

Pending the arrival of a militant ally, I tried my best, wherever I happened to be, to pave the way by word of mouth for a more energetic propaganda in the future; but I must confess, to my shame, that my efforts met with very little success. It is perhaps just as well, under the circumstances, that the expected militant friend has, up to date, as far as I am aware, failed to materialize.

When I explained to a husband that it cannot, in fairness, be expected from the mother of a family to collect firewood in the forest, to bring water from the river, and to carry all the household goods on a journey, I was invariably met by that vacant stare which natives who cannot or will not understand

know so well how to assume; and as to the women themselves, my discomfiture amounted to a fiasco! They had two attitudes in response to my veiled incitements to rebellion: the one was that of benevolent toleration, if not exactly approval, of my intentions rather than my words, the humoring, so to speak, of the harmless hobby of a good-natured eccentric; the other, more humiliating still, was that of boundless merriment, finding expression in peal after peal of laughter, to which the listeners gave way, and which kept on reaching me from the distance, growing fainter and fainter, as they moved away from my camp.

The native point of view is well illustrated by the following conversation which I once had with a Yao, a tribe in which every man is a born "sea-lawyer." As he was leaving his hut, and had already gone a little distance, he called back to his wife to bring him his tobacco.

I said: "Your wife has a lot of work to do: she cooks your food, she looks after the child, she pounds the grain, she brings firewood and water—can you not go and fetch your tobacco yourself?"

"Have I not," he answered, "given her everything she possesses, clothes, and beads, and money to pay the hut-tax; and do I not give her money to buy food?"

"I see," I replied: you look upon your wife as your servant, and what you give her is her salary."

"But," said he, "is it not the same with the women of the white men? Does not a white man get a wife because he wants her to look after his

house and his food? When he wants a new kind of pudding, he tells her, and she looks into her book, where everything about puddings is written, and then she calls the cook and tells him what to do. Is not that the same as with us?"

There certainly was a time when terrible acts of cruelty were perpetrated against women in tropical Africa; but these acts were not so much the consequence of the women's enslaved state as of the omnipotence of the chiefs, who, when they chose, treated their male subjects as barbarously as the female ones. From the moment when British supremacy made it impossible for native potentates to indulge in the satisfaction of barbarous caprices, there was nothing to prevent the existence of native women from running its peaceful course along lines made immutable by a practice which has lasted many centuries.

Undoubtedly, the relations of native men and women to one another are based, not on an idea of inferiority of the one sex to the other, but on division of labor. If in some tribes like, for instance, the Wayao, the woman throws in, by way of *pourboire*, an outward show of extreme humility and submission, she does so, as I will show later, on an entirely non-committal understanding, merely, I am afraid, because the cunning creature is well aware of the weak spot in the cuirass of the lord of creation.

When, in the last-named tribe's country, I saw a woman kneel in the dust when addressing her husband or handing him anything, I could not repress a feeling of indignation with the male, for what I con-

sidered to be the outcome of insufferable arrogance on his part; nor would I believe him when he replied to my outspoken comments with the words: "Have I told her to kneel down? She is following her own heart."

I subsequently found out, however, that this excuse was quite correct. In most of the Nyasaland tribes, permanent connubial life is preceded by a term of probation, which can be broken off at will by either party. When the woman has finally made up her mind to stay, she punctuates her decision by kneeling when she addresses her husband. As a rule, she will inaugurate this change in their relations by a little *coup de théâtre*. She will choose an occasion when chance has brought together a goodly number of people, and she sees her husband standing among them. She will then walk right up to him, kneel down before him, put some trivial question, or give some unimportant piece of information, wait for the reply in a kneeling posture, and, after this has been given, get up and join the others. By thus humbling herself, she has taken possession of her husband!

In some tribes, as, for instance, that of the Wagoni, where probation is not required, the girls will postpone kneeling until after marriage.

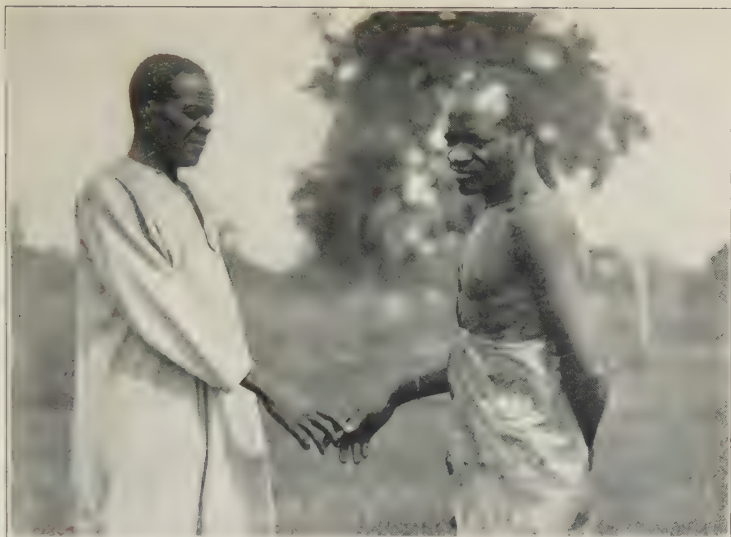
Not only when they talk to their husbands, or hand them anything, are the women of the Nyasa Basin expected to kneel, but also when they minister to their wants, or even when they nurse them during an illness. A common sight is a beau's morning toilette at the hands of his wives. He sits crosslegged in front of a large cooking-pot filled with water, — a

device for a looking-glass, — and his wives, supposing there are two of them, kneel, one on each side of him, one of them holding a small bottle of oil and a long-toothed wooden comb, and the other a knife or scissors and sometimes a flatiron to flatten the recalcitrant curls, as it is every black man's endeavor to have as little kink in his chevelure as possible.

The Wayao, descendants of conquerors, very intelligent, and very conceited, set the fashions in British Central Africa. The neighboring tribes are gradually adopting their customs and habits and even their tribal marks. Something similar to this was, before the war, the Anglomania which was prevalent in Europe among the better classes in all countries.

It would be a mistake to infer, from the ostentation of wifely devotion just mentioned, a particularly humble or timorous disposition on the part of the performers. The whole show is a mere conventional formality, like our surrendering of a seat in a car to a lady, or giving her precedence. Barring a few concessions to traditional custom, native women in British Central Africa enjoy to-day a liberty greater than that of most European married women. Were it not that polyandry is unknown, one might almost be tempted to compare their emancipated status with that of the women of Tibet.

Marriages between natives are essentially *mariages de convenance*, and sentiment rarely plays a part in them. But it is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and the great advantage connected with this materialistic attitude lies in the fact that enforced



Courtesy of Carl E. Akeley and American Museum of Natural History

EARLESS PORTERS



Courtesy of Carl E. Akeley and American Museum of Natural History

DRESSING THE HAIR

celibacy is practically nonexistent among natives. Even lepers in the early period of the disease find a mate; it happens that these, even if they are known to be afflicted with the illness, marry persons who enjoy perfect health.

No man or woman is too deformed to marry. Not long ago I saw a woman, a poor little hunchback dwarf. "Poor creature!" I exclaimed; "she will never find a husband!"

"She has been married for years," was the reply.

A couple of years ago a young Ngoni came to me for medicine for a festering sore on the instep of one of his feet. I asked him how he had come by it, and was informed that it was a bite, inflicted by his first wife in a fit of jealousy, because he had taken a second one. After this act of revenge, she had run away with an askari. I could not refrain from expressing my pity for the poor woman, who had obviously been very fond of her husband. But Joseph — such was that young bigamist's name — could not be made to accept my point of view. He was a picture of a man, uncommonly tall and strong, and he wore war medals besides, having been through the campaign in German East Africa.

I met him again about a year later, and asked him how he was getting on, and if he was still happy with his second wife.

"She has left me," he said; "she has gone to live with James."

"James?" I asked, "the man in the workshop?"

"The same," he said.

Now this James is a hopeless cripple, who moves

about with extraordinary nimbleness on his hands and knees. Like so many native cripples, he is a mechanical genius, and he was, at the time I am writing about, employed in the workshop on the estate of a European.

"You do not mean to say," I said to Joseph, "that your wife has deserted you, a strong, big man, to go and live with that cripple?"

"James has got plenty money," was the brief reply. This, indeed, was retribution.

Nowadays, among the Wayao, the Wanyanja, and the tribes which have adopted their customs, girls are no more bought from the father with cattle or goats and no girl is given in marriage against her consent. This is the case also among the tribes of the Livingstone Range. Chief importance is given to the expenses incurred by the husband on account of the woman, in establishing her household. These are considered as imposing upon the latter a moral liability.

A Yao once asked me if Europeans make presents to the father of their fiancée. When I told him that it is the other way, and that the father gives the daughter money for her married establishment, and that her friends give her presents, he inquired: "Is this because the parents of the girl are afraid that, perhaps, if they give her nothing, later, when the two have been married for some years, and a quarrel arises, the husband might say to his wife: 'What! You dare quarrel with me, and yet, when I married you, you had nothing, and I gave you everything!'"

It is strange how the ideas concerning the conduct

which is expected from unmarried girls vary in different tribes. Among the Wayao and those who have come under their influence, girls are allowed to grow up without supervision or restraint. How great is the influence, for good or evil, of the Wayao over their neighbors, may be concluded from the fact that this laxity of morals has spread even to the Wangoni, although their parent nation, the Zulu of South Africa, punishes girls who have disgraced themselves, by death through warrior ants.

The Wataweta of the Kenya Province allow their young a license as great as that of the Wayao.

On the other hand, the Wapare of the Tanganyika Province, near neighbors of the Wataweta, in order to keep their young girls out of harm's way, were and perhaps still are in the habit of shutting them up for periods sometimes extending to four years, often in solitary confinement, in lofts built into the roofs of their huts! They were never allowed to go out, but were otherwise well taken care of. If in the same tribe a boy and girl sinned against custom, their lives were forfeited, and they were killed in the way in which, according to Moses — Numbers xxv:8 — Phinehas killed the Israelite and the daughter of the Midianites.

The Elgon natives of the Kenya Province shut up all the boys every evening in double-story buildings, and a watch is set over them.

It is to be feared, however, that those tribes which are concerned about the proper behavior of their maidens before marriage are not so from any appreciation, or even comprehension, of "virtue" in

the white man's sense of the word. Chastity merely increases the girl's value as a commercial asset. That this is the case follows from the fact that it is insisted upon chiefly in those tribes where the girl is bought from the parents by the bridegroom without being herself consulted, while it is treated as a negligible quantity where the girl's consent is a condition of marriage.

Nothing could be simpler than the process by which, to-day, in Nyasaland, a man and a woman enter matrimony. The following account gives a good idea of how it is generally done. I asked Soliman how he got his wife.

He said: "I met her on the road and gave her tobacco. Shortly afterward she came into my hut and brought 'ugali' (porridge). I asked: 'For whom is this ugali?' She replied: 'It is for you.' I then asked her: 'Why do you bring me ugali?' She replied: 'Because I want you very much.' I said: 'But you have a husband already.' She replied: 'No! my husband left me a long time ago.' I said: 'This is surely a lie.' She said: 'It is not a lie: go and ask my brother.' I then went and asked her brother, and he said: 'She has told you the truth: her husband left her a long time ago.' I then went to my own brother (his eldest brother) and asked him if he had any objection to my courting that woman. He said he had none, and so she came to live with me."

In due time, when the two came to the conclusion that there existed no radical *incompatibilité d'humeur*, the preliminary arrangement became permanent.

What applies to the courting of grown-up women

applies in an equal degree to that of girls. Their freedom of movement is absolute. They will go to a young fellow "on trial" without first informing their parents, until perhaps, one day, the father asks casually: "Where are you always going, taking food-stuff with you?"

The girl then replies: "I go to a young fellow whom I like very much."

Then the swain, after having been informed by his fiancée that the father is beginning to manifest curiosity, will go to the latter and tell him that he wants his daughter; and the father will say: "Go and speak with her brother." It is always the brother, or the uncle on the mother's side, who is consulted as the weightiest authority; but this is not to be looked upon as a disregard of parental authority; quite the contrary, parents are considered to stand so high above their children that to consult them in anything, or even to hold a conversation with them, would be an unthinkable piece of audacity on the children's part.

Before the two young people agree to live with one another, there is always the same exchange of questions and answers, almost like a ritual.

"Have you not got another man?"

"No!"

"Surely you lie; you have another man!"

"No, truly; I am telling the truth."

The brother is then called upon, for confirmation or otherwise.

If, during the term of probation, the young people discover that they cannot agree, or if the family of

one of the two parties objects to the choice made, they separate. In one case, for instance, in which one of my servants wanted to marry a young girl, the latter's family decided, after she had come to live with him, to settle in another district. Now, among the Wayao, as a general rule, the husband follows the woman and lives in her village. But in this case the bridegroom's family, a body against whose decisions there is no appeal, declared with one accord that they did not wish him to leave the district in which *they* were living. So there was nothing left for the two but to separate.

I felt very sorry for them both; but when I asked Hassan, full of sympathy, if he felt very sorry that the girl was leaving him he laughed, and said: "Not at all!" He was thinking, no doubt, that there are as many fish in the sea as have come out of it.

As long as the bridegroom has incurred no expenses on behalf of his lady, and as long as the relations of both have not been formally and solemnly informed of the union, the separation is not treated as being of any importance. But where all these conditions have been fulfilled, separation is sure to be followed by litigation.

If the native woman's conduct as a spouse, looked at from the white man's point of view, leaves much to be desired, it must be proclaimed, on the other side, that no words of praise could even approximately do justice to her in her character as housewife and as mother.

Her thrift, her patience, her endurance, her uncomplaining and quiet cheerfulness, are the incom-

parable qualities against which her husband has nothing to put into the balance except official representation and the prestige of masculine strength, which, as a protection, is becoming more and more superfluous.

Long before sunrise, long before her husband rises, she gets up to go and fetch water from the lake or from the river. On many occasions this function is accompanied by personal danger, as, for instance, when the only water-supply is a river or a lake infested with crocodiles, or when man-eating lions happen to be about. These generally choose their victims from women who are on their way to the water or returning from it. I have known of many such casualties; yet I never heard of any woman making this a pretext for staying at home.

Other occupations fill the day from morning till night: wood-chopping, grain-pounding and winnowing, hoeing, planting, cooking, nursing the children, fetching mud for the huts and applying it, — the frames are erected by the men, — besides, in some places, making pottery: an art reserved to women, some of whom are clever artists in this industry.

When one asks the men what part of the work is left for them, as the women do practically everything, they invariably reply: "Oh, but do not we get the money for the women to buy cloth with, by hiring ourselves out to Europeans? Where are the women to get money from, if we do not get it for them?"

So great is the glamour attached to money in the native mind, that a man who, by a few months' work on a plantation or as a "boy" has earned

enough to pay the hut-tax and to buy a few pieces of calico, is satisfied that he has done ample justice to his part of the contract, and that he fully deserves, for the rest of the year, his *otium cum dignitate*.

The adaptability of native women to their surroundings and their equanimity under all circumstances are remarkable. They are very like gypsies in this respect. Those who follow their husbands on a journey, with or without children, often without any necessity and only for the fun of the thing, find themselves as much at home in a grass hut erected in haste in the bush as in their own village; and their babies are just the same.

Yet another great quality of these women is the small amount of noise which they make. All chattering, all loud laughing and talking are done by the men, who are engaged in incessant conversation on the most futile subjects from morning till evening, and often, when there is a moon shining, all through the night too, as natives enjoy the invaluable faculty of being able to remain awake at will, without exercising the slightest effort. In a camp women are scarcely ever heard, unless one of them happens to have an hysterical fit.

Black babies are as admirable as their mothers. They are simply wonderful! Nobody who has not lived in close proximity to them for some time can realize how noiseless they are. Once only in twenty-five years has a black child kept me awake during the night; and I do not know to this day what the reason was, as I arrived after dark and left before dawn, and never saw it.

When I once asked a Yao why black babies make so little noise compared with white ones, he replied: "The European father teaches his child to make plenty noise and to break everything it touches, because, if it does not, he thinks it is ill."

The placidity and the contentment of native as compared with European babies is due, no doubt, to their close companionship with their mother, from whom they are as inseparable, *mutatis mutandis*, as little kangaroos from theirs. During the first years of their life, they spend nearly all their time snugly and comfortably berthed in the "kuveleka," the pouch formed by the cloth slung over their mother's back. If they want to sleep, they sleep; when they are awake there is always something interesting to see or to hear, by peeping round the corner. The larder is always full, the table always laid, the perambulator always ready to start; they are kept warm by the best and most natural of warming-pans.

The facility which the native has in sleeping under all circumstances, and in all conceivable postures, must be the consequence of this existence of the child on its mother's back where it undergoes all imaginable variations of tossing; for, whatever may be the nature of the work in which the woman is engaged, she scarcely ever puts the baby down. And the skill with which she manages to carry besides, on her head, heavy logs of wood, or a hoe which balances within an inch of the small passenger's head, is both marvellous and appalling, as it also testifies to her strength of nerve. Often have I been made quite anxious by thus seeing babies, in imminent danger as I imagined,

of being brained; and I have even seen native men who were affected the same way; and I have heard them call out to the women to be careful. Yet it would appear as if nothing ever happened.

I once asked a man if he remembered, in his lifetime, a baby having been injured by the load which its mother was carrying.

"Oh, yes," he replied at once; "I remember very well, a long time ago, at such and such a place."

"And what happened?" I asked; "did the poor child die?"

"Die? No!" was the reply; "there was a little blood, though."

It occurs from time to time that women have hysterical fits — fits which have the same character in tribes settled thousands of miles apart. One hears sometimes that the reason why the Chinese occasionally run amok is the snapping of the bonds of self-restraint imposed upon them by their crowded existence; the fits of black women may have the same origin. There is, however, nothing dangerous or violent about them. They consist, as a rule, in an avalanche of words, chiefly accusations and complaints, which nothing on earth except violence can stop, culminating sometimes in a headlong flight from the village into the bush, with the avowed intention to await death there. Fortunately, however, the crisis always ends before it comes to this. Husbands, when their wives are taken that way, have two alternatives: either to beat them until they stop, or to run away and keep at a distance until the hurricane has passed.

As was indicated above, among the Wayao and

those tribes which their influence has penetrated, woman rules supreme in the household and in the village. I have spoken with many men who, after some hesitation, ended by admitting it. In the villages it is the women who make or mar reputations, as they did in Europe before the advent of the suffragette, and in the house the men follow their advice in almost everything. It is they who decide whether a stranger shall be allowed to settle in the village and to remain there, and whether one of the community who, for some reason or other, is making himself obnoxious, shall be given, by the men, the *consilium abeundi*. When the wife of a native servant desires a change, she will prevail on her husband to leave his situation, however much he may like it personally. "Boys" who have been scolded in the presence of their women invariably give notice. Most thefts committed by men are due to direct or indirect instigation by their wives. Black men are extremely sensitive to ridicule, and what they fear more than anything else is to appear ridiculous or weak before their women. The latter know this, and harp on that string with consummate virtuosity.

What gives the women of the Wayao such a hold over the men is the custom that, after marriage, the man follows the woman to her village, not vice versa; and if, later, the man goes to reside in another place, — as, for instance, when he finds employment on a plantation, — it seems to be left entirely to his wife's discretion, whether she shall follow him or not. Frequently she refuses.

I once had a servant named Moses — a good-

natured, blear-eyed, pock-marked, flat-nosed, squat fellow, very partial to pombe, and particularly unfortunate in his dealings with the fair sex. One day he informed me that he had got a new wife — his third — and that she wanted to come and live with him. So I put at his disposal a large and comfortable hut which stood empty. But anything like the tantalizing behavior of this princess could not be imagined. For weeks she kept on sending messages announcing her impending arrival, without ever turning up. I tried, by scathing comments, to rouse poor Moses, who was daily growing more depressed, to an assertion of his authority; but he was evidently much too afraid of being deserted to risk incurring his Dulcinea's displeasure.

One morning, when I asked him if his bride had at last arrived, he replied, in English, which he spoke rather well: "No; she sent her little sister instead; did you not see that little girl who came yesterday?"

"Why on earth does she send you a little girl?" I said; "why does she not come herself?"

To this he replied, in a meek and despondent tone of voice: "A little sister-in-law for me." Finally he made up his mind to give in, and left me to join her.

Just as in Europe, it frequently happens that mere boys marry women twice their age, and sometimes nearly twice their size. They make devoted husbands, as long as it lasts; but I imagine they are rather henpecked as a rule. In one case which I remember, the wife, a giantess, whom her boyish husband had been carrying — figuratively speaking — on his hands, at last brought matters to a head by requesting him

to cook her food! This was too much, and he gave her up that very day.

Yet, such is the power of conventionality, that, if the husband's brother or his maternal uncle comes on a visit, the wife will at once leave the hut and sit by herself, alone and disconsolate at some distance, until he has gone. And if one asks her why she acts in this way, she replies: "Ninaona haya" (I feel shy). The visitor, if the same question was put to him, would probably say, as an explanation needing no further comment: "Is she not my daughter-in-law?"

One of the chief reasons for the differences between man and wife, which incessantly occur in Nyasaland and are more frequent there than in any other part of Africa which I have visited, is the ease with which the women absent themselves from their homes for varying lengths of time. A pretext is never wanting, and is apparently always taken for granted by the confiding husband.

I have known a Ngoni woman to leave her invalid husband all alone for six weeks; and when I asked him why he consented to being thus deserted in his helpless state he explained, with perfect equanimity, that she had followed up-country a debtor who owed her sixpence!

Native women who run short of provisions often remedy this by repairing to some village in the district where maize is reported to be abundant, and hiring themselves out to take a hand in pounding it, for remuneration in kind. This offers an opportunity for an absence of many days' duration, during which the control of the movements of the absentee

ladies by their husbands is a complicated affair, and quite out of the question when the latter are in fixed employ.

It is deplorable to have to admit that the black woman of British Central Africa, with all her admirable qualities, is sorely lacking in the one essential virtue of her sex. With the sole exception, possibly, of the few Christian women who belong to the nucleus of bona fide converts surrounding mission stations, no native woman is capable of even faintly suspecting that her white sister's attitude toward certain problems of life is either beautiful or reasonable. A redeeming, although rather ludicrous feature of the question is, that Yseult is expected to make, without delay, full confession of her fault to her husband, who otherwise would die if he partook of food in company with Tristan. This is implicitly believed in by the natives of Nyasaland, and confessions of this kind are of very common occurrence.

A somewhat similar idea is the universal belief that a woman whose husband has been unfaithful will grow ill and die of her next child; or that a child at the breast will die if its father is unfaithful to the mother. All the deaths of women with child, or of a child at the breast, are attributed to this cause. Nothing, however, appears to happen nowadays to the guilty father, except that he is excluded from the family mourning-ceremonies.

Open acts of revenge by an injured husband are extremely rare, but that passion may be exercised in a way which cannot be brought home to him. That this sometimes happens I more than suspect — merely

from the character of the people. Also, complete indifference is often assumed, in order to procure convincing proof. But even where this has been forthcoming, the end of the whole intrigue, as a rule, so far as the general public is concerned, consists in nothing more tragic than an endless palaver between the families of the two parties, where the fine payable by the guilty person is definitely fixed.

Rarely does it happen that even the most incorrigible of flirts is dismissed by her husband, if she is otherwise of an amiable disposition. One evening I was awakened by the sound of blows and of a woman screaming. It came from the hut of a man whom I knew, the owner of two wives, one of whom was elderly and steady, the other a wayward young gazelle, who had already twice spontaneously confessed that she had listened to the advances of a neighboring Don Juan.

I rushed to the hut; but when I arrived there, I found the husband only and the first wife; the second wife, caught listening to the blandishments of the neighbor, had, I was told, run away. As I feared that he might have seriously injured the girl, I told the man that, unless he produced her, unhurt, within a day, I should have him seized and sent before the Resident.

I waited two days, and then both appeared before me, smiling, hand in hand. They were still living together, and on the best of terms, two years later.

The absolute immorality of the women of Nyasaland, strange to say, goes along with a modesty, both of word and gesture, in both sexes, which could not

be excelled in the most respectable and *collet-monté* community of white people. Exceptions occur only when a woman gets drunk.

The rule as to what constitutes and what destroys the respectability of a grown-up woman is a different one in almost every tribe. Where morality is practically nonexistent, as among the women of the Nyasa Basin, nothing, obviously, that a woman could do could injure her honor. Among the Wakinga of the Livingstone Range, a hardy race of mountaineers, women are forbidden two things: to accept money in return for their favors, and to bestow them on men not of their own race. To the latter restriction was due, before the war, the total absence of all disease — an inestimable boon, perhaps unique in the world. But whether this happy state of affairs has survived the “passing of the days of war” is, alas, another question. The Masai woman, in the Nyika of what now forms the Kenya and Tanganyika Provinces, is a model spouse; but the unwritten law of the nation imposes upon her husband the duty temporarily to surrender his house and its inhabitants to anyone of the Elmorao (members of the warrior caste, who are bound to celibacy as long as they belong to it) who desires to take possession of them, and to keep away as long as he sees the latter’s long spear sticking in the ground in front of the door. This husband was an Elmorao himself before his marriage.

Ethically, there is a great resemblance between all native women, from the Juba to Capetown; but physically they are as different as white women of different nationalities; and their ideas as to the kind of

ornaments best adapted to their particular style of beauty vary even more.

Most Europeans, I believe, imagine that, although a Negro woman may have a fine figure, the general type of the features is the same, and shaped more or less on the lines of the traditional black woman of story-books. No idea could be more erroneous and more unjust. People may differ as to the question whether perfect classic beauty is compatible with a black skin; but, leaving the Somali out of the question altogether, because it is not quite certain if, black though they are, one is justified in calling them Negroes, there can be no two opinions as to whether an ebony Venus of Milo — the term “black,” when applied to the human skin, has as many shades as the spectrum — is not occasionally met with, very much alive, indeed, among the Wagala or the Waswahili. Perfectly regular features are probably more frequent among the former of these two races than among the English, the Italians, or the Greeks. Besides, the headdress of the women of these tribes — small curls arranged on both sides of the central, longitudinal parting, and converging toward a small tuft just above the nape of the neck — is not unlike the classic ideal.

The headdress of the Masai and the Wataveta women, where beautiful faces, although of a somewhat different type, are as frequent as among the tribes just mentioned, is also very becoming and very striking, consisting, as it does, of leather bands forming a kind of skullcap on top, and hanging at both sides of the face like the curls of our grandmothers,

terminating in huge, brightly polished metal discs, the whole being rather suggestive of the faces of saints on Greek icons. Unfortunately, these women shave off their eyebrows, as did the Gioconda and her contemporaries.

But neither the Swahili nor the Masai headdress has, so far, been universally adopted as a fashion; and no woman's face in the world, were it as beautiful as that of "the serpent of old Nile" herself, can with impunity support a black woolen pincushion in lieu of a *chevelure*.

Native women who have not grown either self-conscious or bold by much intercourse with Europeans often have charming manners: the low laugh, the graceful movements of the head, the play of the eyebrows, the subdued gestures, the total absence of affectation (which is in itself the hall-mark of good breeding) — no *grande dame* in Europe could excel them in these; and those whom age has deprived of the charm of youth often astonish the stranger by their wisdom and their sense of humor.

It is a matter of ever-recurring surprise and wonder to me, that the very tribes in which women enjoy the greatest freedom and have most power, namely, the Wayao and the Wanyanja, are also those in which they are ugliest, and where, besides, they do their best to increase this ugliness by disfiguring themselves with their idiotic ornaments. These "improvements" are threefold; about the most atrocious of the three, the flattening of the breasts, the less said the better.

The other two are called, respectively, the "chipini" and the "pelele." Both are studs. The chipini

is worn in the side of the nose, the pelele halfway between the nose and the upper lip. The chipini is one inch across, the pelele often much larger. Indian women sometimes wear a small piece of jewelry in the nose, which looks very pretty. These natives, however, can do nothing in moderation, and the enormous chipini distorts the wearer's nostril, down and sideways, across half the cheek. It looks horrid enough when the chipini is worn; but when it has been lost, or sold, there remains nothing but the gap where it ought to be; and the impression given is that of a permanent disfigurement due to some accident.

I remember that, when I came to Nyasaland and saw for the first time a woman who had left her chipini at home, I thought she was ill, and told my attendant to ask her if I could help her in any way. Natives always avoid giving a direct reply if they can, and so the answer which I received in this case was that, "perhaps" there was nothing the matter with the lady's nose.

The women themselves could probably be prevailed upon to give up wearing these horrible things; but, unfortunately, the men like them, and encourage them to wear them. A Yao, a great Don Juan, once announced to me that he intended going in search of another wife. I wished him good luck and added: "I hope you will find a pretty wife, one who does not wear that dreadful chipini."

"What!" he exclaimed, horrified; "nothing at all, like a man?"

If the chipini is bad, the pelele is worse. A peculi-

arity of the natives of the Nyasa Basin, some Wanguoni excepted, is the great distance between nose and upper lip; the line, besides, projects outward at an angle from the nose, almost like a beak. It is midway between the nose and the lip that the pelele is worn, and one asks one's self whether the length of that line is due to the wearing of the pelele through countless generations, or whether the pelele was put there to relieve its monotony. The natives have a theory to explain the invention. They say that, when a woman grows old, she loses her front teeth, and that then her upper lip, by getting into the mouth, prevents her from talking distinctly; but that the pelele keeps the lip up, and that those who wear it can talk just as distinctly without front teeth as with them. Possibly! But why, then, do not the old men wear a pelele, too? They never do.

There exists a surprising similitude between the lower part of the face of a woman who wears the pelele and the beak of the female trumpet-hornbill, — the "hondo-hondo" of the natives, — a bird which is indigenous (although not exclusively so) in the countries whose inhabitants wear that ornament. While the male hondo-hondo carries, over beak and forehead, the helmet of a Roman centurion, his partner contents herself with a round disc, like a pelele in shape and size, which she wears midway between the root of the bill and its tip. The resemblance is so striking that the observer involuntarily asks himself if it is not due to something more than a coincidence. Can it not be that, in the long, long ago, some of the women decided to follow the bird's example, as



NGULU WOMAN WITH DECORATIVE PELELE
FRONT AND SIDE VIEWS

a new and original attraction in their intercourse with man? Or was it a sultan, perhaps, who, in a barbarous humor, experimented as to how his women would look with the female hornbill's jewel, and thus set the fashion?

Unlike the chipini, the pelele is, fortunately, disappearing. It is scarcely ever met with, now, in the Shire highlands, although the people to the east of Lake Nyasa still wear it. The missionaries, I am told, are doing their best to induce the children to refuse to undergo the perforation above the lip, which is necessary for the insertion of the stud.

The indifference of natives to human physical beauty, which practically amounts to its total elimination as a factor in the relations between the sexes, has often been commented upon. A native whose attention you draw to the handsome features of another native — either woman or man — always responds vaguely, indifferently, never emphatically, rather giving the impression that he does not quite understand what you mean. It is significant that there exists, in the Swahili language, no word which expresses handsome, or beautiful, exclusively. The word "zuri," the only one used in this sense, means good, as well as beautiful, the first idea conveyed, when it is applied to a person, being always that of moral, rather than physical, excellence.

The incongruity which often exists between parties forming a union almost suggests the absence of even individuality as a factor in these relations. And yet it would probably be incorrect and unjust to explain the phenomenon by the preponderance of mere brute

sensuality over all finer feelings; for it cannot be denied that natives are by no means devoid of a sense of beauty. They admire it in animals, in flowers, in pictures, landscapes, and music; they have clever artists; and their perception of what is ridiculous in expression or appearance is perhaps keener than that of the average European, notwithstanding their passion for the odd and the baroque. One might say that their indifference to beauty is confined exclusively to sex relations, or that their æsthetic sense is in default only where these relations come into play.

The explanation of this bizarre trait in the character of the African Negro can perhaps be found in the surmise expressed by the author of *The Traveling Diary of a Philosopher*, that natives of the Tropics cannot feel love as we do, our love being founded entirely on an imaginative power which they do not possess; for, surely, the faculty to feel love is an essential condition of the faculty to appreciate physical beauty.

V

IN THE CHIKALA RANGE

THE old "boma" in the Chikala Range, where I lived over six months, had been uninhabited for almost ten years when I entered it. Although it would be classed, in Europe, as a young house, it is an old one for tropical Africa, where houses age in a decade as much as they do in Europe in a century. No one would look for a house in the remote and savage locality where it stands, twenty miles from the nearest white settlement, while the nearest Yao village is scattered at the foot of the mountain, there being no native inhabitants at all on this eastern part of the range.

The boma, as its name implies, has been, during the brief period of its commission, a tax-collector's residence; it is built of brick, with a corrugated-iron roof, a large verandah, and bow windows, and its interior still shows many signs of the taste and the love of comfort which directed the builder in his work. It cannot be expected, however, that the structure should, unattended, unlooked-after, resist the destructive effect of time and the seasons. There is scarcely a bow window with all the panes entire; not a curtain left; not a brass bolt unbroken. Stains and rusty nails on the walls bear testimony to the artistic proclivities of the last inhabitant; the wainscoting is, in many places, detached from the walls; the white-calico awnings stretched underneath the ceilings of

the rooms are torn in parts, and in parts stained and eaten by the droppings of the bats. Only the beautiful fireplace of carved cedar has remained intact, with the added beauty of the patina acquired with age. The many traces of past comfort and elegance, the present dilapidated and neglected condition, the savage aspect of the surrounding scenery, the magnificent bushes of European roses right in front of the verandah, a grove of thick mango trees just behind the house — all these contrasts give to the old boma a touch of romance, as if it were taken out of a chapter in a fairy tale.

It is built on a terrace, about 2000 feet above the plain, and is surrounded on three sides by an amphitheatre of hills, which form part of the main range. This, the Chikala Range, runs from east to west. The amphitheatre, from its eastern and western wings, rises gradually to a dome of granite over 5000 feet high, the highest point of the range, due north of the house. The latter faces south, embracing a view of half the compass over plains and mountains. To the left, Lake Chirwa — ten miles away at its nearest point during the dry season, but approaching its boundaries according to the volume of water brought by the rains — runs south to northeast. The two black island-hills in its middle look like joints of beef on a silver dish.

During the dry season, the “palombe” (plain) looks limitless, sky and veldt meeting in a haze along the horizon. During the rains, however, the whole view is changed. Beginning in the southwest with the majestic Mlanje Range, nearly ten thousand feet

high in its highest peak and barely sixty miles in length, mountain range follows mountain range all along the horizon, past and far round the lake, into Portuguese territory, with a few breaks only, through which the plain rolls on into the unknown.

Here and there, in the champaign, isolated hills rise, sometimes to a considerable height, the characteristic "island-mountains" of tropical Africa. In the Nyika of East Africa those hills rise at regular intervals from the level plain. There I noticed a curious particular. I have climbed none on which I did not meet, somewhere near or on the top, a puff adder larger in size than any which I have ever seen elsewhere, either free or in captivity — a weird *genius loci*, probably centuries old, letting the time rush by while it lies in a lethargic state of eternal digestion, punctuated by single meals at intervals of months. As none of my Masai companions ever showed the slightest inclination to kill one of these anchorites, but appeared to be opposed to my doing so, I came to the conclusion that they must be fetish.

Whether the mountain islands of Nyasaland share this peculiarity, I have not, so far, had occasion to ascertain. Lake Chirwa, however, enjoys a zoölogic speciality also — an almost unique distinction. The many crocodiles which inhabit it are not more dangerous to man than so many sheep! So I was assured by all those inhabitants of the lake shore whom I consulted on the subject. I asked them if they had charms. They said no: with those crocs there is no need of charms!

But Mother Nature, always anxious to correct any

small anomalies which may occur in her household, has, to reëstablish the balance, — a hobby of hers, — peopled the lake with venomous water-snakes, dreaded by the fishermen as much as crocs are dreaded elsewhere. The natives say that they stand erect, naja-fashion, among the reeds of the lake shore, half submerged by water, and when a man has passed them, but not before, they charge him.

This snake, which the Yao call “kassábuhe,” is most beautiful, being marked in an undulating pattern of black and brown and gray, with thin bright-yellow straight lines running from head to tail. Barely two feet in length and thick in proportion, it bears, with its stumpy tail, a certain resemblance to a puff adder. The form of its head, however, and the position of its fangs, suggest the proteroglyph. Its aggressiveness appears to be a fact, and distinguishes it from the land snakes.

The *changements de décoration* of the landscape exceed in variety anything that one could see on the stage. In autumn, or better, in spring, the veldt shows as many different colors as the rainbow. But as soon as the rains begin these change into many shades of green, from emerald and apple-green to dark olive, grading, in the distance, into one uniform tone of bluish gray.

The colors of the hills, with the exception of the islands of the lake, which are always of a dark greenish-brown, vary according to the time of day. Those which roll away into Portuguese territory, as they recede, grow fainter and fainter, until they look like

a breath on a pane of glass. Immediately after sunset, however, when the sky behind them is pistache-green, they appear clear-cut, heavy, and transparent, like mountains of gray quartz. The high Mlanje Mountains sometimes at sunset seem to intercept, with their dark-blue mass, the glare of an immense conflagration, the shine of which just peeps over the outline of their pinnacles; at other times they are hidden by a bluish-gray wall of vapor, fringed with lilac all along the top; while the sky just above them is of an intense, luminous orange, which, as the night advances, grows blood-red.

Often, in the early morning, the whole plain is covered with a sheet of low-lying white mist, out of which the island mountains emerge like rocks out of a frozen arctic sea. Or else the lake alone, brilliant like a mirror under the horizontal rays of the rising sun, is covered as if with cotton-wool by a layer of densely packed white clouds, which follow its contours just as if they had been spread there by a careful hand.

With all its beauty, however, the landscape never loses that indescribable something which characterizes all African landscapes — something intensely melancholy, brooding, and ominous, as if some terrible event were held in suspense.

Clouds, as Sir Martin Conway says, are not a bit less beautiful than mountains, and they form, with these, during the rainy season, combinations and groups which remind one of Doré's illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*. Each chain of mountains will act independently of all the others, having its own

particular set of clouds, its own thunderstorms and strokes of lightning. One range may be swathed in a sheet of torrential rain, while the other, through a rent in the clouds overhanging it, is struck by beams of sunlight. Occasionally, however, when it rains for good, a perpendicular, solid, gray wall of rain creeps slowly from the fast-disappearing mountains over lake and plain toward Chikala; then the plain vanishes; then the solitary tree at the far end of my terrace; and then it comes down on the corrugated-iron roof in one continuous, deafening roar.

One would imagine that no living creature, except a fish, would enjoy getting a tropical downpour on its back. To this my two ravens, Grip and Nevermore, — chance acquaintances with whom I have formed a solid friendship, — are exceptions. Instead of seeking shelter, which they could find in abundance far and near, they will, when overtaken by the avalanche, sit on an exposed granite boulder, their backs to the wind, with shoulders raised and head bent, like Mr. Dombey's brother-in-law when his wife annoyed him, and apparently sink into a kind of torpor, as, under these conditions, they refuse to respond to the most tempting morsels of food.

The champaign is most beautiful during the period of the veldt fires, which begins toward the end of October and lasts until the rains are on. In the daytime the flames are invisible from here; but in calm weather great columns of smoke rise, like Moses' pillar in the desert, sometimes to an immense height, and spread out in the sky to tremendous black clouds, which intercept the light of the sun and plunge into shade

half the plain. In stormy weather, the spirals of smoke rolling fast along the ground look like the steam of express trains running full speed. At night the flames are visible, and then the bush-fires look like burning cities, and make the onlooker think of sack and rapine and murder. Where they burn low, they suggest the keys of an organ of fire touched by invisible fingers.

The lake has its fires, too, but they begin later and cease later. It is full of reeds in many parts, and these the natives burn, to facilitate fishing during the rainy season.

But the most beautiful sight is when, in a still, calm night, the conflagration extends along a large segment of the eastern horizon, and the full moon rises out of it, as intensely luminous as the fire itself, like the birth of a planet out of a sun, when creation was still young.

At the northern end of the lake, almost due east from here, lies the village of a chief called Chikweo, which has just now been the theatre of a lion story more than usually dramatic. For several months past, a man-eating lion had been spreading terror among the villagers by periodical appearances, which were nearly always the occasion of the killing of a man or a woman. Several times he was frightened away by the men appearing en masse after he had seized his victim, but he had killed fourteen, and wounded six, so I was told, before his career ended.

It came about in this way. An old woman, who belonged to another tribe, had been living for some

time at Chikweo's village with her young daughter, who had a baby at her breast. These three were living in a hut built of logs, on the outskirts of the village. With characteristic native improvidence, on the night in question, in the early part of December, they slept with the door of the hut open, and the lion crept in and jumped on the old woman. In a moment the daughter had made up her mind — to save the baby and sacrifice the mother. She slid out of the hut with the child, pulled the door to, dragged a heavy log of wood against it, and gave the alarm.

With the rapidity with which natives are capable of acting in an emergency, the villagers collected, brought more logs of wood, built a strong barricade all round the hut while the poor old woman was still alive and screaming for help; and then they sat down in a circle and — it was before midnight — waited for dawn.

At dawn — the old woman by that time was dead — the chief Chikweo came with his Snyder, jumped on to the roof, gave, through a hole, one shot to the lion, and went home to sleep, having, by drawing first blood, secured the government reward. After that, the lion was finished off by others through the roof, partly with Chikweo's Snyder, partly with spears.

It is possible that the woman might have been saved, if, instead of closing the door upon her and her terrible guest, her daughter had contented herself with rushing out and calling for help; or even if the people had reopened the door of the hut, as the lion would perhaps have been frightened by the

noise and the sight of so many people, and might have tried to rush out. But the villagers thought that such an occasion to get the man-eater would never return if they let it slip.

If one considers how great is the love of natives for their mothers, — it is their one pure sentiment, — one can imagine how violent must have been, in the girl's heart, the conflict between the love which she bore her mother and that which she felt for her child.

The chief, sleek and debonair, called on me on his way to Zomba with the lion's skin, and gave me all the details. When he mentioned the shutting-up of the old woman with the lion, he suppressed a smile. He told me that the animal — as could be seen from the skin — was very old, with part of its teeth gone and the rest in a bad condition. That it was frightfully hungry became evident from the fact that it did not allow the vicinity of so many people to disturb it in its meal; and that, after it had finished devouring its victim, of whom there remained only the head and the larger bones, it killed and ate all the chickens in the hut.

There was a remarkable sequel to the tragedy. Chikweo told me that, on the day that followed it, on the very morning of the day when he passed my place with the skin, a lioness, believed to be the man-eater's consort, came into the village, killed one man, and went away again. She had never been known to kill anybody before, and she has made no reappearance up to the time of writing this, three months later. When last I asked after her, I was told: "Oh,

she has left, she has gone into Portuguese territory!" One must admit that this single murder of the lioness looks uncommonly like an act of vendetta.

Lions are probably very long-lived. The longest authenticated duration of a lion's life in captivity is, I believe, that of Pompey, who died in 1760, after a captivity of seventy years in the Tower of London, prison of kings; and one may safely assume that, when they enjoy their freedom under congenial circumstances with no enemies to speak of, man excepted, they live much longer. That they are monogamous is certain, although the assertion made by some, that they mate only once in their lives, is open to doubt and would be difficult to prove. The affection that unites male and female is a sentiment as strong among the higher mammals, and felines in particular, as it is among human beings, if not stronger.

To the broad-minded observer it must surely appear rather unfair on the part of the "destroyer," or the "lord" (as some prefer to be called), of creation, that he calls "savage" all those animals that feed as he himself does! They eat their meat raw, — some human athletes and valetudinarians do that too, — but they slaughter their victims with infinitely less cruelty than man, instantaneously always, and with no preparations at all. If lions, which are forced by dire necessity to kill a man, sometimes make a mistake in this respect, it is only because they are unfamiliar with his anatomy. Man-eaters are no doubt objectionable; but such individuals are rare, and their action is the consequence of homicidal mania, or of old age and helplessness.

Leaving quite out of the question the cannibals of Oceania and West Africa, white men have been known, and not so seldom either, to devour one another when the second alternative was death from starvation. And lions and leopards have the distinction here, that they never commit cannibalism. They fight, they kill each other, and I am afraid that very old lions sometimes have a bad time at the hands of younger members of the community; but according to all accounts they never eat one another, however hungry they may be.

The northern half of the compass is taken up, at close range, by the amphitheatre of hills which forms the background of the boma terrace. While the high dome of the centre is sheer granite, almost down to its base, its two wings are formed by tier after tier of huge boulders, the gaps being filled by densely growing, dark-foliaged trees.

Some of the boulders are crenelated with lichens, other tainted white with the droppings of birds. On many of them stand solitary trees of considerable height. Their exposed roots, running down forty and fifty feet, as broad sometimes as a small stream, flattened against the rock, bleached as white as ivory, clutch the granite in a grip so tight that one imagines one sees the strain of gigantic effort, as in the arms of an athlete or the tentacles of an octopus. Who can say how long the strain of the embrace has lasted?

The appearance of a human being on the footpath which skirts the eastern slope of the amphitheatre is usually the signal for a concert of whistling sounds

in the rocks above, beginning with isolated notes and increasing in number, until they seem to proceed from almost every one of the huge boulders. Birds or boys might whistle in this manner; the virtuosos are, however, neither of these bipeds, but *hyraces*, better known as rock rabbits, of which a few families live among the rocks. These interesting, harmless little creatures have of the rabbit only the name; they are no relations of those rodents, but actually the smallest cousins of the elephant. As climbers, they are unsurpassed, being able to scale almost perpendicular flat surfaces, like lizards. Their nests, built adhering to the foot of overhanging boulders, resemble very large swallows' nests. They are, unfortunately, prized as an article of diet by the natives, who persecute them ruthlessly.

A large and beautiful lizard, the agama, common to all the mountainous countries of tropical Africa, brings a bright touch of color to those granite boulders which it has elected as its domicile. Its head and neck are a brilliant chrome-yellow, its body sea-green, its tail turquoise-blue. Being of an inquisitive turn of mind, it scans the approach of the stranger with marked curiosity, by moving its head up and down, before it rushes to conceal itself in some crevice. If one keeps very quiet, however, it will come back, and, if she happens to be present, start courting its lady, indifferent to the fact that she has no beautiful colors to boast of on her plain brown body. It is very amusing to watch them at play, running round and round and making love to one another, at which latter game their habits are remarkably like those of

dogs. In order to attract them to a certain rock, and accustom them to my presence, I tried to lure them with insects, which I deposited on the boulder; but I signally failed in the beginning, as live insects of course ran away, and the lizards would not touch dead ones. And then I had the lucky idea of collecting the clay nests of a certain ubiquitous wasp, which builds them all over a house or a tent, in the most improbable places, including such things as the sleeve of a coat. There the wasp deposits — in separate compartments — the paralyzed bodies of all sorts of maggots, caterpillars, and spiders, making the nest serve both as a casket and as a larder for its own young. I extracted those unfortunate paralytics, some of which, having accomplished their ghastly destiny, were already metamorphosed into full-grown wasp pupæ. My experiment afforded me proof that the outraged creatures lose nothing of their freshness in their living tombs, as the lizards devoured them with the greatest gusto.

The slope of the mountain where the rock rabbits dwell is visited and occupied temporarily and alternately by a large herd of yellow baboons, and a herd of black monkeys. of the kind called “kimas” by the Swahili. These monkeys are beautiful creatures, with hair almost black, and the full-grown adults nearly attain the size of a female baboon. Unfortunately, however, full-grown individuals are rare, the reason being, I am afraid, that their skin and flesh are much in demand.

The relations of these two tribes are, I am sorry to say, strained. They never occupy together the

same side of the range. The baboons will come and stay for a week perhaps, then the kimas will come and stay as long — it is always, however, turn and turn about; when one nationality turns up, the other goes. While the voices of the apes vary largely, according to the sex and the age of the individuals, and while the gamut of sounds which they do give forth is almost human in its extent, the monkeys are singularly behindhand in this respect, and utter one kind of call only, an unmusical sound, like a very loud croaking. When it happens to be their turn for occupation, they collect, every evening, on the tops of the largest boulders, and in chorus call out their farewell to the setting sun.

There is something touching in this cult of the sun practised by many animals — the origin, perhaps, of man's worship of the fixed star. When walking in the early morning, years ago, along the sea beach in Portuguese East Africa, and in Natal, in places where the virgin forest came down to the shore, I was always struck by the sight of the monkeys, which sat motionless in the topmost branches, with outstretched arms, looking at the sun as it rose out of the Indian Ocean. Many of the larger birds greet the rising sun with the same gesture of adoration.

The love of a mongoose for the sun amounts to a passion. A few years ago, I was living in a house to which the rays of the setting sun came, through a cleft in the hills, at one single spot only in the uninhabited back-part of the house. A small mongoose that I had, although it hated to be alone, went there by itself every day when twilight was near, and, lying

down on the verandah, watched the sunset. As soon as it was gone, she would quietly come back into the house, seek her couch, and go to sleep. As long as I lived in that house, she never once missed the sunset. Before she died, a few years later, she laboriously climbed up to the thatched roof of a hut where I was then living, by a kind of staircase I had erected, and gave a long, last look at the sun; then she came down again with great difficulty, and died.

On the top of the range, also to the east, live a couple of leopards. As they have been calling frequently, both at night and sometimes in the afternoon for several months past, they are supposed to have a family of young, this being a sure sign, the natives say. They prey largely on the baboons, and no doubt on the kimas also, although I have not been able to ascertain that for certain. But as to the baboons, I can occasionally follow by mere sound, mostly at night but sometimes also in daytime, the developments of the chase. The old males of the baboons, always *en vedette*, begin by uttering their cavernous barks, an imposing and even formidable sound, not unlike the leopard's own, but of far greater volume; the young males shout like boys of the human species, and the females scream in a higher key, the whole herd moving along up the slope while they produce these noises, which generally begin nearly at the foot of the slope, about level with my boma. From time to time, during a lull of the baboons' barks and screams, the stalking leopard utters his grunting, halting growl. As a rule, the alert ends in nothing, the various noises ceasing gradually, as the

baboons get out of reach and the leopard gives up the hunt. But when, instead of fizzling out, the adventure ends in piercing yells and screams, and the barks of the old baboons become howls of rage, I know that the great cat has been successful in securing a good meal for the family. If I want additional proof, I get it on the following morning, when my two ravens, which live in the forest not far from the leopard's lair, make no appearance at early breakfast as they invariably do otherwise, but stay away till noon, and then show little appetite.

The old saying, that it is an ill wind which blows no one any good, applies also to this predilection of leopards for baboon's meat, quite apart from the benefit which they themselves and their clients may derive from it. Where many baboons live in a locality inhabited by leopards, the latter annoy the human inhabitants in the neighborhood very little, if at all. They do not go out of their way to capture goats in the villages — always a risky thing to do; and even dogs, which are so often killed by leopards, appear to be allowed to move about in comparative safety. This is perfectly accepted by the natives, who will not even prevent their small boys from climbing the mountain, into the leopards' reserve.

Wild pigs stand to lions in the same relation as that of apes to leopards. Where lions, whose relations with baboons are courteous, even cordial, live in the vicinity of wild pigs, the natives will treat them, as they do leopards, as negligible quantities or — where the pigs are destructive to crops — even as desirable guests. Regularly, in February, when the maize is

ripening, a couple of lions cross the Chikala Range coming from the north, to make war on the wild boars which, at the same time, leave their forest haunts, to bring devastation into the fields. Why the lions should prefer, for these excursions, rainy weather to dry, is difficult to explain; but it is a fact that, so far, the only nights in which they called out their warning were nights of pouring rain.

Two things exist in nature, concerning which a mistake can never occur. These are the voice of the lion and the color of gold. Whoever hears the one or sees the other, knows what it is. This does not mean, of course, that the reverse is the rule also. Many men have mistaken the cry of the ostrich for that of the lion, and tenderfoots' gold for gold. The lion's voice — his hunting-voice, not his roar, which is so seldom heard — is absolutely unique in character, just as he to whom it belongs is unique. Though it is extremely powerful and carries to incredible distances, and although it sounds ominous, and sometimes awe-inspiring by implication, there is in reality nothing either cruel, or bloodthirsty, or even savage in the sound itself. To me it has always appeared as the most consummate expression of despair uttered by a powerful creature in moral, not in physical, distress.

Of these Chikala lions the natives seem to have as little fear as they have of the leopards of the range; and the knowledge that they are about does not prevent men from climbing up the mountain for bamboo or for wood.

Some fifteen years ago, when the coffee and rubber

plantations of the Usambara were still young, and much damage was done to them by the many herds of wild pigs which live there, the turning-up of a lion on an estate was looked upon as a favorable event by some of the German planters, who in consequence strictly protected him.

In this connection it may be interesting to record an event narrated by Emin Pasha — in one of that pioneer's letters, I believe, published by Dr. Franz Stuhlman. Somewhere in Equatoria, Emin's followers had dug a pit to catch big game, and a lion fell in. As soon as this was known, a native from the neighborhood, owner of many cattle, came running, and implored Emin to let the lion go. He said that, in exchange for a weekly tribute of a bullock, the lion kept away all other beasts of prey, and himself, except his regular weekly allowance, never touched a head of cattle belonging to his ally. The man's request was granted, a plank let down into the pit, and the lion climbed slowly out and went his way.

I was assured in the Pare Mountains of what is now Tanganyika Province, that a native there formed a similar alliance with a leopard which, against the regular supply of a goat, protected from all enemies the owner's herds, and even slept in the loft of his hut! I have failed to substantiate the truth of this story, but there is nothing intrinsically impossible in it.

Before the war, a German medical officer then in charge of the sleeping-sickness commission on the west frontier of the colony had a full-grown she-leopard, which was as tame as a dog. His colleague,



Courtesy of Carl E. Akeley and American Museum of Natural History

CHILDREN WITH THEIR PET



AN AFRICAN LEOPARD

Doctor Taute, well known for his far-reaching experiments in tsetse infection, told me that, whenever one of them returned after an absence, the huge cat would stand up on its hind legs and rub its head against the face of its friend, in manner of welcome. A drawback was the circumstance that, at certain times, all the male leopards of the neighborhood appeared to have given themselves a rendezvous in the vicinity of the camp. The idyll, unfortunately, came to a tragic end, as those idylls always do, a statement for which one must leave the priority to *Æschylus*. The doctor's leopard seized a dog belonging to a native; the native attempted to interfere, and the leopard killed him instead. So sentence of death was passed and carried out on the affectionate creature. A characteristic sequel, so my informer told me, was the appearance in the camp on the following day of the victim's father, who simply said: "I want my bakhshish."

That leopards have a sense of humor, although of a somewhat grim kind, they show by their curious habit of planting the bare skulls of animals which they have killed and eaten on a forked branch high up a tree.

Their common sense they show by their disregard of fire, which is so well known to natives who are accustomed to leopards, that they never use this means in order to keep them away from a hut or a camp.

These preventive measures are more successful where lions are concerned, but, even with regard to these, the sweeping notion imbibed in our childhood,

that "wild beasts are afraid of fire," requires revision. Some lions avoid the fire, no doubt, but certainly not all. In British East Africa the natives used to say that large, flaming fires irritate lions; and I have certainly known cases where lions cleared a large fire as they would have cleared a fence. It would appear as if the most effective fire against lions were a low-burning, not flickering or flaring, but steady fire.

While the lion's cry, on a dark rainy night, is a distinctly unwelcome sound to the traveler who sleeps in his tent, it has, on the other hand, when one hears it from inside four solid brick walls, an effect similar to that of a ghost story by a brightly burning fire, on a social winter evening.

A beautiful and imposing bird, by its numbers and by its powerful voice, attracts attention on the range as effectually as do the two felines just mentioned. It is a fishing eagle, with head and neck and half the body snow-white, which owes to its remarkable vocal qualities its Latin surname: *vocifer*. From long before sunrise till long after dark its clarion-call — which in some individuals resembles somewhat the whinny of an excited stallion — resounds about the heights of the range where it builds its eyrie. In many countries it has served me as a welcome signal that the night was nearly over and the day approaching. When it calls, it behaves in a peculiar manner: it poises in mid-air, and, while uttering its shriek, frantically and simultaneously moves up and down both head and neck and tail. It is exhilarating to see them dive for fish as I often did on Lake Nyasa. They "take a header" into the water like any human

champion diver, to emerge again and fly up into the air some hundred feet farther on, nearly always with large fish in their beaks. They are fortunately on the protected list in this country.

There are certain things, instantaneous pictures of the memory, often in themselves mere trifles, the thought of which brings back with extraordinary force the realization of the particular romance of a milieu — like Zarathustra's lizard, or Rudyard Kipling's "firefly in the cane." One may read whole books about tropical Africa without feeling its atmosphere with the intensity impressed in a second by the mention, for instance, of a crocodile basking in the sun on a sandbank by a lazy river; or of a solitary elephant standing under a mimosa tree in an expanse of *Sansevieria*, spraying itself with red laterite dust; or of lemurs dancing a fandango on the top of a coconut palm in the full moon of Zanzibar.

To this category belongs also the appearance of the *bateleur* eagle, most graceful of birds, sailing motionless above the champaign, under a clouded sky, a perfect Cupid's arc in outline. The *ecaudatus* — he was treated niggardly by Mother Nature in respect to his caudal appendage — makes occasional appearances here, but never, like his vociferous cousin, penetrates far up the range, as he prefers the plains, of which he is so characteristic an inhabitant. These great birds of prey mature slowly; from the third or fourth year onward the jaws grow a scarlet-red, like those of some macaws, to which they have a further — moral — resemblance, in that, when brought up from childhood, they become fully as

tame as a parrot. Large as it is, that magnificent eagle feeds, according to the natives, almost entirely on rats and mice and snakes, and never becomes a danger to the poultry yard. No doubt, the beautiful colored plate of a bateleur attacking a jackal in Sir Harry Johnston's *Uganda* is either a libel or the portrait of an exceptionally enterprising individual.

At the foot of the range, Mposa's village straggles along, with interruptions, for nearly two miles.

As is the case in all Yao villages, each hut, in size like a small cottage at home, stands in its own grounds, sometimes with a small patch of maize attached to it. Where there is no garden, the whole place is kept free of vegetation and well swept; this gives to the village a singularly clean aspect. Here and there a very large tree stands by itself in grounds equally well swept, affording shade for palavers and shelter to the chattering carrion-crows. Lots of wag-tails fly unmolested between the houses, although it is a favorite pastime of the boys to hide in the high grass with a long rod, and kill small birds, when they balance in the reeds, by hitting them with it. Wag-tails, however, are fetish, and never touched. The Yao have given them the pretty appellation, "doves of God." Children, goats, chickens, and dogs run about; the grown-up men, when not at work, either sit before the chief's house, or play cards in front of their own. The women, never idle, are occupied in various household tasks.

On nearly all the roofs, fish from the lake, extended in rows, are drying in the sun, in a buzz of metallic

flies. One kind of fish only is caught at the present season, a siluroid in two or three sizes. The small ones, bent round in a circle, are stuck on rods in rows; the larger ones are cut into two sides and flattened out. The second kind of fish, which favors deep water, is not caught until the rainy season is well advanced and the shallow lake has attained its full size.

It is well known that Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, the great English dermatologist, — who, by the way, fruitlessly endeavored, some twenty years ago, to persuade the world to abolish leper-reserves as barbarous, inefficient, and unnecessary, — ascribed nearly all occurrences of leprosy to the consumption of insufficiently cured fish. If this is really the fact, one does not see how, at least for many years to come, the evil can be stopped among the millions of natives around the lakes; for one might as well expect them to give up breathing as eating fish. The establishment of curing-centres under government supervision appears to be the only practical solution.

Chief Mposa's principal house is conspicuous by its size and its elevated, matted verandah, with two deck-chairs. He himself — quite apart from his picturesque attire, which consists of a red turban, a corduroy khaki-colored shirt, a dark-blue skirt, and a long sheath-knife — certainly looks the most distinguished person in his village, being tall, dignified, and good-looking, with a short full beard. He might, from his aspect, be taken for a black Arab from Zanzibar. His subjects kneel to him, as he himself kneels to his invalided old mother; but his authority does not appear to be of a despotic kind; its chief

manifestation probably consists in these outward tokens of respect.

If Mposa's grand air is due to his descent, this would furnish an argument to those who opine that the stronger qualities are inherited through women, as, in Yao dynasties, the laws of inheritance act in a way which one might compare to the advance of the knight on a chessboard. The sultan is succeeded, not by his own son, but by his eldest sister's eldest son. It was, however, explained to me that, if this eldest son of the sister is "very stupid," his younger brother will succeed in his place; and if he should happen to be very stupid also, the third, and so on. It would be interesting to know by what standard the intelligence of these potential heirs is measured.

Mposa's heir is being brought up here under his uncle's eyes, although his mother lives in another district. I hear this was insisted upon by Mposa himself, which is certainly a sign of sound judgment. The boy is being looked after by his "little mother," as the Yao call the aunt on the mother's side. When a Yao mentions his mother, one never knows if he means his real mother or her sister. As a rule, he means the latter, because there is always a reluctance to refer in speech to the direct progenitors, apparently from a sense of veneration and respect.

The impression which the settlement makes is one of peaceful prosperity — a truthful one on the whole, so far, although beer-fights, with broken heads, occasionally occur. It is true that the natives in the lake regions have an almost unlimited supply of fish to fall back upon, as well as — here in Chikala at

least — reserves of rice, and the rock rabbits and klipspringers and other beasts of the mountain and of the plain; but they could no more be expected to live entirely on these than the Parisians of Marie Antoinette could have lived on the *petits pains* which the unfortunate Queen liked so much. But natives never bother much about the future, confident as they are that the Government will provide help if it comes to a pinch; besides, they are all fatalists, to a really exasperating extent.

Even without food-worries, however, life in Mposa's village is not without drawbacks, one of the worst being the great quantity of mosquitoes bred in the neighboring swamps. The notion, entertained by some Europeans, that natives do not suffer much from mosquito-bites, is quite wrong. They are probably as sensitive to them as we are. How much they suffer from them in Mposa's village can be judged from the pathetic device to which they have recourse at the beginning of the rains, before the cool weather begins, when mosquitoes are at their worst. They keep men walking about, with beating drums, far into the night, so as to be prevented from going to sleep early, as attempts at an early sleep would be frustrated anyhow. So they are being kept awake by the drums until sleep really overpowers them, and then there is a chance of being able to outsleep the stinging. Some of them, however, are the lucky proprietors of mosquito-curtains; and there can be no doubt that, if the remainder seriously desired it, they could, by practising only a little economy, and by refraining from spending on trifles every shilling earned,

soon find themselves in the same position. But Negroes one and all resemble that guardsman of Ouida's who, rather than go to the exertion of taking off his boots, preferred to suffer agonies of pain from their narrowness.

On the whole, so long as it has sufficient to eat, the community appears to be as contented as any community which one could see in Europe, if not more so; and there are always occasions of excitement, mostly of a mild description, to prevent it from getting unduly bored; as, for instance, the visit of the Resident or the Assistant Resident from Zomba, or that of a neighboring chief, or the passage of police askaris in search of a thief, or a beer-fight, or a dance. There are, besides, tribal ceremonies and festivities, which take place at certain periods.

One of the latter, which is of a character rather quaint, took place a couple of months ago at the close of the girls' "uniago" or period of initiation. During that period, which lasts for about a month, the girls, every age from childhood to full-grown womanhood being represented, live together in a large hut built especially for that purpose, and are there prepared by old women, the wisest in the village, for the vicissitudes — and the pleasures — of life, and instructed as to the lines to be followed in their relations with the other sex.

For several days before the time appointed for the disbandment of the young ladies, a couple of men, whose particular business it is, were busy in the forest, manufacturing, out of bark and grass, resemblances of lions, hippos, and crocodiles, hollow and sufficiently

large to enable a man to crawl inside. These the men put on, like circus-clowns, on the evening of the last night, and, having reached in silence the house of initiation, began to imitate the movements of the animals which they impersonated, while the lion, in addition, produced with a large earthen vessel an admirable imitation of that animal's voice.

The older girls, who had been warned, pretended to be horribly frightened; while the smaller ones were so in reality, and began to scream, and the lot rushed out at the back of the hut. After they had reached a certain distance, the grown-up girls explained to the younger ones that the whole thing was a joke, and then they all came back laughing, to examine the menagerie more closely.

The purpose of the whole affair, so I was told, is to teach the children to beware of wild beasts when they happen to meet them.

The show ends with dancing and pombe-drinking for two days and two nights.

VI

FAMILIARS IN THE WILD

It is the deplorable tendency of the generality of mankind, that it comes to definite conclusions about men and things on insufficient evidence. There exists only one class of people in the world which, as a whole, judges correctly nationalities other than its own — the class of common sailors of tramp cargo-boats. The extent to which all the rest, even the cleverest, overrate the value of their personal experience, is apt to make one doubt the sanity of mankind in general.

Because a man has a Jewish stockbroker, or his children a Catholic governess, he imagines that he knows all that can be known and said about Jews or Catholics. The German who travels across the continent in one compartment with an English commercial traveler leaves the train imbued with the ineradicable conviction that the British are a nation of shopkeepers; whereas, on the other hand, the Englishman who, on the same journey, has been bored to death by the conversation of an erudite German philosopher, will be ready to swear ever afterward that Lord Palmerston was right, after all, when he called the Germans a nation of “damned professors.”

Unfortunately these misconceptions are generally less harmless than the elegant fraud of Prosper Mérimée, who, without knowing a word of Slavonic

or having ever crossed the Adriatic, enriched the French literature of his day with a classic translation of Dalmatian folklore. Who can imagine for a moment that Seneca, with his Christian-morals and ethics, would have encouraged his Imperial pupil's persecution of the Christians, if he had lived among the latter for ever so short a time? (Unless he had, maybe, the gift of prophecy, and foresaw that the world-championship for cruelty would be wrested from Nero's memory in a Christian country, in the second millennium of Christianity.)

The same applies, if possible even in a higher degree, to the notions harbored by the majority of people as regards animals, although we may no more believe with the younger Pliny that a lion loses all his strength when a cloak is thrown over him, or, with Shakespeare, that horsehair imbedded in mud will develop into worms. The reason why the professional hunter is, as a rule, so far ahead of the professional biologist or zoölogist, lies in the circumstance that the former derives his knowledge from intercourse with animals in the wild state, protracted often over considerable periods of time, while many of the latter, by the nature of things, derive their knowledge from caged specimens only. One might as well attempt to write a treatise on the human mind from observations made on Kaspar Hauser or Tsar Ivan IV of Russia.

Ludwig Büchner, the author of *Kraft und Stoff*, writes in a less well-known, but equally profound and far-reaching book of his, *Liebe und Liebesleben in der Tierwelt*, the following words on this subject:—

“It will be found that, with few exceptions, all those who have had occasion to observe animals without prejudice and with sound common-sense, and to live in personal contact with them and listen to their doings, will entertain an entirely different opinion about their intellectual and psychic qualities from those who follow the traditional theories of philosophical schools.”

If Cuvier was correct in his opinion that the reason why animals take so readily to man, and so easily, under friendly treatment, lay aside their shyness of him, lies in the fact that they do not see in him a being of a different order, but rather one related to themselves, then it would appear that they have stolen a march on us, and forestalled, from the time of our appearance on the stage, pregnant to them with such sinister possibilities, an idea which, if we except a few isolated pioneers, has only in quite recent times begun to get hold of our understanding.

That animals look upon man as one of themselves, and not as an object entirely beyond their horizon, is evidenced by the remarkable interest and curiosity regarding him and his doings shown by wild creatures, and by their desire to make friends with him as long as their confidence has not been met by rough rebuke and persecution — which is, alas! the usual response given by the destroyer of creation to such friendly advances.

It is our own fault only, if birds all the world over are not even now on the same footing of familiarity with us as were the birds of the Monte Alverna when Saint Francis of Assisi arrived there; or the birds of

the Falklands and the Galapagos Islands when Darwin visited them; or as the birds of Southern Morocco are at the present day — or were, at least, under Mohammedan rule, a few years ago.

But even birds which have learned at their cost that to come within reach of man is an infinitely greater risk than to approach a wild cat or a snake, will still, when they believe themselves unobserved, and while taking all necessary precautions, often give way to the feeling of curiosity with which the appearance of the long biped in unexpected localities and on unexpected occasions inspires them.

I remember, in this connection, the fleeting visit to my camp, in the Livingstone Range, of a beautiful but shy and furtive bird, a "trogon," which has no doubt developed these characteristics in consequence of the persecution which it owes to its magnificent plumage. (It was particularly mentioned, along with several other species, in the *Field*, about fifteen years ago, by a writer unknown to me, on account of the wholesale slaughter of birds, perpetrated for the benefit of a Paris modiste, by a French merchant living in one of the coast towns of German East Africa, with the help of an army of natives.) My visitor, however, whom his "instinct" informed, perhaps, that from me he had nothing to fear, although still cautious, allowed his inquisitiveness to get the better of his shyness.

In front of my tent, about twenty yards away, and as much, perhaps, above the ground, two almost horizontal branches of two different trees formed a cross, the one reposing on the other. Each day at two P.M. precisely, when after luncheon I sat in the entrance to

my tent, smoking my pipe, the trogon would suddenly, and as silently as a night-jar, alight on the lower of the two branches, on the side away from me, so that his body, in size about as large as that of a dove, was completely hidden. And then he would slowly, slowly, lift his head above the intervening branch, and scrutinize me and my dog and my tent, with strange and almost uncanny intensity. After looking thus for a while, down went the head again behind the branch, to reappear, a few minutes later, in the same cautious and furtive way.

Nothing in the camp had the slightest interest for the trogon besides myself and my immediate setting. To the native camp, which was some distance from his tree on the other side, he never gave a single glance, being no doubt perfectly well acquainted with natives and their ways. He continued his mysterious visits for several days in succession; and then, having, I suppose, come to the conclusion that he knew all about me that was worth knowing, he disappeared.

Wild birds quickly learn to distinguish a friend. It has often happened to me that, when I arrived in some locality, and pitched my tent close to a low tree, within a couple of days after my arrival sometimes one small bird, sometimes more, arrived in the evening immediately after sunset, went to rest in the foliage for the night, and then kept up the habit for the whole duration of my stay, being confident that, so long as they slept near me, no wild animal would dare disturb their slumber.

Once when I was lying ill with fever, down in a cañon off Lake Nyasa, a small blue kingfisher took his

post on a low branch, not two yards outside my tent, where I could have hit him with a stick, and thence waged war on all insects which came near and attempted to come inside to madden me with their humming and buzzing. That kingfisher remained at his self-elected post the whole time that my illness lasted; and I have often thought that, had a Herr Professor turned up in the neighborhood with a rook-rifle, he would have run a fair chance of suddenly slipping off a cliff, or of swallowing a dose of *strophanthus* with his coffee, by mistake.

One wonders whether Henri Bergson, on whose shoulders has fallen the mantle of Emmanuel Kant, would have established his sweeping repartition of reason and "instinct" between man and beast, — no doubt a most convenient and simple arrangement, — if he had variegated his scientific pursuits in Paris with occasional excursions into the jungle.

None of the great naturalists have had much use for the conventional idea of "instinct" versus "reason," at least so far as the vertebrata are concerned. Darwin expressed his opinion that no fundamental difference exists between man and the higher mammals in respect to their intellectual faculties; and L. H. Morgan, the historiographer of the American beaver, thought that "the misleading expression 'instinct' ought altogether to be dropped."

In a pool at the bottom of that cañon where the kingfisher watched over me during my illness, there lived a colony of frogs, which cheered up my sleepless nights with their musical performances. These concerts had exasperated me when they first started, and

I had thought that I could see some excuse for those feudal lords in the Middle Ages, about whom we read that, to avoid being disturbed in their sleep, they kept an unfortunate menial all night near the castle moat, whose business was to beat the surface of the water with a long rod, in order to silence the batrachians every time they started croaking. But my discontent, after I had perforce listened for a while, gradually gave way to attention, then to interest, and finally to appreciation and wonder.

It was quite impossible to fail to notice the system and the method which ruled in these choruses. There were different bands singing alternately in different keys, without ever clashing with one another; and the quality of the voices of each particular band differed from the quality of the voices of every other band; so that I came to the conclusion that each band was recruited from individuals belonging to one and the same category, classed, perhaps, according to sex, or age, or to the degree of skill attained. Bandmasters gave the signal to start, indicated the key, interrupted, sang a few notes by themselves to make clear their meaning, ordered repeats, stopped performances. There were uninterrupted solos religiously listened to, performed no doubt, by recognized virtuosos; competitions between individuals and also competitions between bands.

I felt that there was something strangely, weirdly human underneath it all. It may have been my fever; but then, we are told that in fever our perceptive faculties grow more acute. I came to the ineradicable conviction that frogs are intensely musical by nature;

that they love harmony and enjoy it; and that their singing constitutes their relaxation after the business of the day is over. We may perhaps assume, in judging by analogy from the habits of singing birds, that the solos are competitions of troubadours, with the ultimate intention of delighting and attracting individuals of the opposite sex.

But it is difficult to see where instinct can come in here.

Even regarding the fantastic, inconceivably intricate, yet marvelously methodical habits of insects, which seem to leave no other choice but that between a supernatural intelligence and an unerring, equally miraculous instinct, opinions do not all incline in favor of the latter.

One of their greatest antagonists in the cause of suffering humanity, but a more generous foe than one is accustomed to meet in these days, — Maxwell Lefroy, — has not hesitated to pay them the following tribute: "A dispassionate examination of insect life reveals that even man's powers are as nothing to those of insect life; his senses weaker; his sociology and conduct of life far inferior to that of the social insect; and he himself comparatively lacking in the exhibition of altruism and right conduct shown by insects."

Brehm, the greatest of German zoölogists, who can certainly not be taxed with lack of practical experience, has written, in his treatise on the raven, that no one who has lived for any length of time in friendly companionship with one of these birds will continue to adhere to the old theory of instinct versus reason in connection with their kind.

That ravens have a compelling personality all their own, exceeding in forcefulness that of most creatures of the animal kingdom, — with the sole exception, perhaps, of the lion, — is manifest from the part which they have played in the affairs of men since the beginning of recorded history, and of the importance given to them in religious tradition, in mythology, in historical legends and in fairy tales.

We read in the book of Job — xxxviii, 41 — that the young of the raven “cry unto God” for food; in Psalm 147 they are mentioned as being fed, apparently as creatures entirely distinct from the rest of the animal kingdom; and elsewhere in the Bible we read that they brought food to Elias, as they are reported to have done, at later periods, to various holy hermits.

Odin has two tame ravens sitting at his right and left; ravens hold watch outside the Kyffhäuser where the Emperor Barbarossa, with his red beard grown through the marble table, waits for the resurrection of Germany; and the immortal Grip, as we know, is not wholly a product of Dickens’s imagination, but the faithful copy of an original who led a very tangible existence in the author’s house.

My personal experience of ravens in captivity is a very restricted one: I have known only two — one which lived in a large monastery of Cistercian monks, and delighted us small boys, when we visited it, by its antics and its talk; and one which belonged to an American lady — the wife of Field-Marshal Waldersee, born Miss Lee, and widowed Princess von der Nöer. This latter raven was a great favorite in the household, and was always brought from the country

to Berlin, where it enjoyed comparative freedom in the courtyard of the house, being closely united in ties of friendship with its mistress's dachshund.

But if my experience of ravens in captivity is defective, I have, nevertheless, had many friends of that kind, only they were all independent and free individuals, who had never known bondage. And I may state at once that, strange as it may sound, the initial step to the acquaintance was invariably taken by the other side, never by myself!

All these ravens were Central Africans. Not unlike European ravens in size and shape, the only concession which they make to the fashion adopted by their family all over the dark continent, — namely, to redeem the monotony of the plumage by white colors somewhere on the body, — consists in a pear-shaped white patch on the nape of the neck, and in a white spot on the tip of the beak. This raven is called *corvus albicollis*, in some books on Central Africa; but whether it is identical with the *corvus albicollis* of South Africa seems doubtful. Brehm does not think that it is, and calls it *corvus crassirostris* in his natural history, which name bears testimony to the remarkable thickness of its beak.

The *corvus crassirostris* occurs in two distinct social combinations: as a feudal lord on uninhabited mountain-ranges, and as a communist in the neighborhood of European settlements of some importance. But, unlike its cousin, the carrion crow, it does not descend into the plains. My friends belonged invariably to the first of these two social categories; and what I have to say here relates to that alone.

The custom is for one pair to occupy a reserve in which other ravens are not tolerated, their own children excepted, so long as they have not created a household of their own — an event which, among ravens, probably takes place as late as it does among the large birds of prey.

During my rambles on the mountain ranges in the vicinity of Lake Nyasa, as soon as I had finished pitching my tent, the pair ruling in that particular district invariably made an appearance and, sitting down at some distance from the camp, on a boulder or a stumped tree growing from the rocks, surveyed us critically. After a time they flew away again, often to come back on the following morning, on other occasions to return no more, having obviously been dissatisfied with our appearance. In time, I adopted the habit of propitiating these potentates by offerings adapted to their taste, just as I would have done with a native chief, when entering within the precincts of his authority.

When I remained for any length of time camped in the same place, as was my habit in the rainy season, during which — on mountain ranges of which some, like the Livingston Range, average 8000 feet in height, and are, besides, intersected by many streams — traveling ceases to be pleasant, I continued these peace-offerings from day to day, as a token of appreciation of the friendly interest taken in my affairs by my visitors. They, on their side, soon began to appear in my camp regularly every morning, with that remarkable punctuality which animals acquire so much more quickly than men, and which the

French assert to be *la politesse des rois*. Sometimes they stayed in the camp a few hours only, sometimes all day; but they always left toward evening, flying in the direction of some mountain fastness where they had their home.

They rewarded me for my hospitality from the very beginning, by chasing away from the vicinity of the camp, with incredible energy and violence, all, even the largest, birds of prey which came near it. This was an invaluable service, deserving of my undying gratitude, as I often kept small pets which, but for the ravens' vigilance, would of a certainty, sooner or later, have fallen victims to the large and fierce rapacious birds which abound all over Central Africa.

All these ravens, after a time, learned to come at my call, and answered it, sometimes even at a considerable distance from my camp, when I was out collecting mineral specimens; often also, on these occasions, they joined me unexpectedly of their own accord; so that by and by I made it a rule never to start in the morning without taking with me something for them to eat.

During the rainy season of 1912-1923 I lived in a small forest on one of the slopes of the gorge through which the Ndumbi River descends into the plains, on its long journey toward the Indian Ocean. I had spent the preceding rainy season in another camp, but close to this one, and there had made friends with two ravens, to whom I had given the classic names, Seneca and Poppæa.

It had been clear at the time that Poppæa had a

nest with young ones, as she used regularly to fly away, after each meal, in the direction of a distant cluster of trees, her beak and gullet filled with provisions. And, to my great surprise and pleasure, as soon as I arrived on the Ndumbi in October 1912, after an absence of six months, Seneca and Poppæa came, accompanied by two full-grown youngsters. That the latter were their children was obvious, because otherwise they would never have been tolerated near the camp. But they soon gave me another proof of the fact, by their own remarkable behavior.

One morning, when Seneca and Poppæa had been feeding with "ravenous" appetite, faster than the two others were able to follow, the latter, afraid of seeing the whole breakfast swallowed before their eyes ere they had time to assuage their own hunger, all of a sudden gave up the contest, ceased eating, opened wide their beaks, and began to beat their wings against their sides, for all the world like tiny little nestlings when they see their parents arriving with food. Whereupon, both Seneca and Poppæa interrupted their own meal, and fed from their beaks those two beggars who were fully as large as themselves.

These two youngsters, less experienced than their parents, who perhaps had drawn their circles around the peaks of the Livingstone Range a century before the arrival of Dr. David, soon became much more familiar than their elders, taking food from my fingers without fear or haste — a thing which the old ones never did without showing a certain hesitation. These four remained my constant and cheerful

companions during the whole of the rainy season, which lasted eight months. Every day, in the early dawn, they came through the air, cawing as they approached, and a moment later they entered the large bamboo shed which I had erected over my tent, advancing with a true sailor's roll, and very self-conscious, — as intelligent animals always are at the beginning of a visit, — eager to share the maize cakes of my early breakfast.

Like all my raven friends, those on the Ndumbi soon looked upon me as their chief source of food, as became apparent from the long stays they made in my camp, and from the provisions which they were in the habit of taking with them on leaving in the afternoon. But they went, now and then, on hunting expeditions of their own; and several times, when they had failed to make their usual appearance in the morning, I subsequently ascertained that a native hunting-party had passed in the neighborhood on the same day; as I have mentioned elsewhere, my Chikala ravens also remained absent from my fleshpots when the leopards of those mountains were on the hunting path.

Although they accepted and ate nearly every kind of food that I offered them, they had, of course, their preferences, and to a few things they objected entirely. Of eggs, either raw or boiled, they ate only the yolk, and absolutely refused to touch the white. I have wondered at this until I read, quite recently, what has greatly increased the very high opinion I have of ravens, that is, that of eggs the yolk only contains the vitamins which are so important a part

of our nutriment, and the white none at all! Food made with flour they liked fried, but not otherwise; as, for instance, pancakes or chupatties.

Needless to say, it is meat, raw or cooked, which they prefer to all other forms of diet, and they do not mind if it is slightly tainted, as we do not, either, where game is concerned. But — again like ourselves — although they are passionately fond of fish, they will not touch it if it is not absolutely fresh, and refuse even boiled fish which has been standing overnight, showing themselves much more fastidious in this respect than the Central African natives, who do not appear to mind in the least fish with a very pronounced *haut goût*.

Occasionally my boarders caught a mouse, which they killed before they swallowed it, breaking its neck against a stone, by swinging it by its tail held tightly in the beak, being wiser in their generation than the poor young lady mentioned in a magazine a few years ago, who swallowed a live chameleon as an advertisement and died in horrible pain in consequence, it being found at the autopsy that the chameleon was still alive!

Like European ravens and some breeds of dogs, African ravens delight to hide their surplus wealth of food in cunningly devised caches, after the manner of Arctic explorers, sometimes betraying themselves in quite human fashion when one comes near, by conflicting attempts to combine an appearance of indifference with profound watchfulness. In one respect, however, they differ advantageously from their European cousins — though my companions

had every opportunity to steal, I never missed a single thing.

It has been stated by Europeans that the *corvus crassirostris* of Central Africa kills little chickens, like the blood-thirsty *corvus albicollis* of South Africa, which has even been known to attack and kill sheep, as does also the South African baboon. I am confident, however, that my friends have been calumniated; it may be that isolated misdeeds of single individuals with perverted tastes have been magnified into a general habit of the whole tribe. Not a single authenticated case of such a crime has come to my notice; and moreover, all the natives whom I have asked were unanimous in asserting that they never do such things. Natives do not kill ravens; if the latter were a danger to their poultry, they would wage against them the same relentless war which they wage against hawks, whom they follow, when they surprise them *in flagrante delicto* with a chicken held in their claws, by running from tree to tree for miles, until the bird, exhausted by the weight of the fowl which it will not drop or from which it cannot extricate its claws, collapses on the branch of a tree and is killed.

The Europeans who accused the *corvus crassirostris* of kidnapping chickens very probably wanted an excuse for exercising skill in shooting them; besides, many of the old pioneers are said to have been partial to *corbeau en casserole*, like Napoleon's veterans.

On the Ndumbi, beef was occasionally sent to me from a place some forty miles away, where the magistrate regularly killed a bullock for his posse of

police. The arrival was usually quite uncertain, but it was always hailed in advance by Seneca, Poppæa, and their children, whom I had called Aliturus and Messalina: as soon as the messenger with the meat was within a few miles of my camp, they would suddenly show signs of excitement, and then rise into the air and fly, cawing, to meet him.

The Central African raven in its character much resembles our own, and, like it, combines cunning and prudence with familiarity and confidence. It would be a mistake, however, to think that all individuals are cut after the same pattern. Among ravens, as among so many kinds of the higher animals, there is as much differentiation of character as there is among Europeans, and perhaps more than among certain races of aborigines. This is not necessarily a compliment, if we admit that strong differentiation is essential to the intermediate stage between the lowest and the highest state of development, while it flattens out at both ends. But it appeals; for personality, as Goethe says, is our greatest pleasure.

One of my four ravens, Aliturus, was a great humorist. It was his special delight to play with Rikki-Tikki, my banded mongoose. Every day they amused themselves together. Aliturus followed Rikki-Tikki, now in short jumps, now in his rolling gait, intent on catching the tip of his tail. Rikki-Tikki, as cunning as he and well aware of his intention, pretended to notice nothing and, with an occasional furtive squint backward, strolled slowly along, now stopping for a moment to dig, now standing up on

his hind legs like a bear, to sniff the perfume of a flower, now jumping after a grasshopper; but at the very moment when *Aliturus* reached out for the pinch, he made one leap into the air and round, with lightning-like rapidity, only to miss, sometimes only by a fraction of an inch, his aggressor, who immediately retired, flying low above the ground, with *Rikki-Tikki* in hot pursuit.

I have had no experience of a breed of animals in which the males do not show conspicuous courtesy to the females. It is universal, and I see no reason to disbelieve the gentleman who assured me that he had seen, in the Gaboon, a male gorilla peel a pineapple and then hand the fruit to his consort.

There is no difference, in this respect, between birds and mammals. Indeed, it would appear as if deference toward the "weaker" sex were as fundamental a natural law as the love of the mother for her offspring.

I had excellent opportunity, while I stayed in the Chikala Range of Nyasaland, to ascertain that ravens make no exception to this general rule; which is, after all, no matter for surprise, when one comes to consider the high level of their intellect. Their chief article of diet in that locality consisted of fish, which was brought to me from the lake every day; and as I always had it boiled it was moist, of course, and had therefore to be presented to them in a plate, which I put on the verandah of my house.

There were two boarders only — Mrs. Grip and Mr. Nevermore. I had soon found out who was who, from the fact that Mrs. Grip made her appearance

on the premises much later as a rule than Mr. Nevermore, as she was, no doubt, reluctant to leave her nest in the forest and her young before the sun had ascended sufficiently high in the sky to give them warmth, and because she left my place three or four times a day, with as much food in her beak and gullet as she could carry. She took the greatest pains to pack the food well, so as to avoid the risk of dropping something on the road (although I saw it happen occasionally), and, at the same time, to take as great a quantity as she could possibly manage.

The preparations for each flight were most painstaking: she always disgorged her cargo three or four times on the verandah before she felt quite satisfied; and then she often made false starts and came back for some slight alteration in the disposition of her articles. When everything was all right and she was well under way, she always uttered, notwithstanding her full beak, one loud, unmistakable call, which I never heard from her on any other occasion, to inform Mr. Nevermore that she was now leaving for good — a call which was as certainly meant to express, "Now I'm off!" as if she had shouted it in plain English. Nevermore sometimes followed, sometimes stayed on. Occasionally he, too, carried away some food, but never anywhere near so much as his lady.

Nevermore showed his touching regard for Grip in that he never dreamed of taking the smallest piece of food before she had fully satisfied herself. If they were both present when the dinner was served, he waited patiently until she gave him leave to approach by stepping aside; but if the plate was put

on the verandah before she had arrived, he flew up to the top of a tree near the house, and there started cawing frantically and unceasingly, until she came sweeping down and on to the verandah with a great rush of wings, which always reminded me of Paolo and Francesca. She, of course, always fell to at once, as she was fully justified in doing as the mother of a family.

On two occasions only did my four ravens in Ndumbi make an exception to the rule that no other ravens were allowed in the neighborhood of the camp. Twice a single stranger appeared in the reserve, who was good-humoredly tolerated for several days, and then left. I can only assume that it was a young raven with matrimonial intentions, the scion of another dynasty, who came to propose to Messalina after sounding the views of her parents. On both occasions the visit remained without visible result.

My hope that a pair of my raven friends would, one day, follow my safari and stick to it, was never, alas! realized. They would follow the caravan for a time, flying above it and apparently much excited; but not in a single instance did they accompany me so far as the first camping-place of the journey, obeying, evidently, the unwritten law in the code of ravens, not to penetrate into foreign reserves.

Swallow-tailed brown kites, so common all over Africa, are as willing as ravens to make friends with man, and frequently appear in camping-places. They were always ignominiously chased away by my ravens, but once, in the Pare Mountains, where I never saw the *corvus crassirostris*, I formed an *entente cordiale*

with one of them, which became very tame. Although perfectly adult when we first met, it soon learned to come at my call, and even to my table at meals. Its habit was to come flying high up in the air, whistling softly, poise for an instant over my head, and then drop, "like a thunderbolt." But, charming fellow though he was, I am sorry to say that, unlike the ravens, he was utterly dishonest. He successively stole, from under my very nose, my shaving-brush, a teaspoon, a table-knife, and a napkin; he even tried to steal my hat!

The catholicity of that bird's taste in food was surprising. There was nothing in my own bill of fare that it would not eat; to scones it was especially partial, but it also swallowed boiled rice and potatoes with gusto.

As it was apparently quite alone, and I never saw another of its kind in that neighborhood, I fondly hoped, as I did with regard to the ravens, that it would follow me when I should leave.

But I was deceived in this case as in the other, although it, too, showed excitement when it saw the caravan depart. It followed for about a mile, flying wildly about high above our heads, and then suddenly turned back.

The drawback about these friendships formed in the course of a vagabond life is that, when they come to their inevitable and abrupt end, one cannot give to those who will be left behind one word of warning or preparation; so that the departure must, in their eyes, appear in the character of a callous and heartless desertion. Indeed, if one looks coolly at the

question, there can be no doubt that it is distinctly unfair to accustom to a life of ease and comfort creatures which, in their ordinary existence, have to exert themselves all day long to find food for themselves and their offspring, and then, when they have got used to being fed regularly and in plenty, to throw them back to the necessity of shifting for themselves, like children who have been brought up in the expectancy of wealth and in luxury, who, at their father's death, find themselves penniless.

VII

ONLY MONGOOSES

THE mongooses to whom this "In Memoriam" is dedicated belonged to the African variety known to the naturalist as *Herpestes zebra* or *fasciatus*, as distinct from, but less well known than, the two most celebrated varieties of this rich species, namely, *Herpestes Javanicus*, to which belonged the mongoose of mongooses, Rudyard Kipling's Rikki-Tikki, and *Herpestes ichneumon*, the "rat of the Pharaones," once as sacred as the cat, but now fallen from its high estate.

In appearance, the African variety are quaint-looking, "cobby," rather clumsy little creatures, not larger than a guinea pig when full grown. Their legs are short, and those in front are bent like those of dachshunds, to whom they have a certain resemblance. To sit up is, with them, a pose as familiar as it is with the bear, and when they do so, and let their bent forelegs hang down on both sides of their chest, they look very much like penguins on shore. In some individuals, the hair of the lower part of the jaws is of a much lighter shade of gray than is that of the rest of the body, so that they appear, when looked at *en face*, as if they wore whiskers.

Their chief strength lies in the neck and jaws, which are, comparatively speaking, of tremendous power; this quality, joined to the extreme accuracy

of their aim, of which their game affords so startling a proof, supplements, when they hunt or fight, any disadvantage which may be due to deficiencies in their build, and explains the fact that they almost invariably succeed in seizing a snake behind the head, before it has had time to strike.

Nevertheless, I did not encourage my mongooses to tackle snakes, except small ones, for it always appeared to me as if a zebra mongoose, owing to that clumsiness of shape just mentioned, must be at a disadvantage when confronted by a full-grown and wide-awake cobra. In my own experience, I have known only one instance of a snake's striking a mongoose. The mongoose was still very young and the snake a small green tree-snake. The mongoose was apparently lacking in the inherited instinct of its race, and seized the reptile, in a desultory sort of way, far below the neck. The snake struck, without much energy, at the jaw of its aggressor, who at once dropped it, and slightly shook himself, but showed no further signs of distress. He did not, however, renew the attack, and the snake made off. I was not sure that the latter was venomous, but I watched the mongoose with some anxiety for the next twenty-four hours. Nothing happened, and I concluded that everything was all right. A month later, the mongoose died with all the symptoms of having been poisoned; but its mate died at almost the same time, showing exactly the same symptoms, and as these pointed to sublimite, of which my boys — who hated the mongooses — knew the effect, and which they could, besides, easily procure, I incline to the belief

that the poor little creatures fell victims to native vindictiveness rather than to the self-preserving instinct of the snake.

Brehm mentions somewhere — and seems to disbelieve — a statement which he heard from Arabs in the Sudan: that ichneumons combine to attack and kill large snakes. I have never seen this happen, but I have been assured by natives in Taveta that mongooses do combine to attack and kill pythons. and that they do not devour the dead reptile, but let it lie and putrefy, returning to the spot every day, until they find that the maggots are large and numerous, when they will feast on these.

It has also been said about our mongooses, that they imitate the call of gallinaceous wild birds, and thus attract them near enough to seize and eat them. There is no doubt that among the many various sounds which they are able to produce there are some which are an almost exact imitation of the voice of the francolin; but here the story ends, for mongooses, like dogs, refuse to eat game birds, whether raw or cooked.

Unlike the larger varieties of their species, banded mongooses are no danger to poultry, although they will sometimes start charging chickens for fun, as dogs do. Their natural food consists chiefly of amphibians, small reptiles, mollusks, insects, spiders, and mice. Of snails they are extremely fond. To break their shells, they seize them with their hands and, with unerring aim and marvelous strength, propel them through between their hind legs, against a rock or a tree in front of which they post themselves for

that purpose, sometimes bucking with incredible swiftness, just in time to let the projectile pass clear underneath. They treat large eggs in the same manner, a habit which accounts for a common belief that eggs form the chief item of their bill of fare. As a matter of fact, they much prefer a snail to an egg, and they will not eat the latter if they have other, more congenial food, although they will generally break the egg just to amuse themselves, even if they do not touch the contents afterward.

I regret to say that they are also very keen on eating batrachians. They dig these out of their æstivation-holes, which they discover by the scent. Frogs they will eat without preparation, but toads they roll about first like a rolling-pin, the object being, no doubt, to make them get rid of their secretion. They handle hairy caterpillars in the same manner before falling to.

Out of a number of mongooses which I have possessed, three stand out prominently in my memory — never to be forgotten. One of them, Rikki-Tikki, was my companion for close on eight years; the two others — two ladies, called Maskini (Swahili: “poor person”), and Mshenzi (Swahili: “uncivilized”) — entered into my life two years after he did and preceded him in death by one year and six months respectively. Only once, as long as this symbiosis lasted, have we been separated for the duration of thirty-six hours. I can therefore write about them with as much authority as could Boswell about Dr. Johnson.

During the five years which I spent, uninterrupted and solitary, in a forest of the Shire highlands, my

chief pleasure consisted in the rambles which I took every morning in the company of these three friends and my two fox terriers. The five of them enjoyed these excursions even more than I did, being scarcely able to restrain their impatience when, after my early breakfast, the time to start was getting near.

The greatest sport for the mongooses and, *par ricochet*, for me, who watched them, was the hunting of tarantulas. These love to build their underground dwellings — which are shaped somewhat bell-like with a small, sometimes invisible, hole in the surface — along the native paths.

When the mongooses followed these, they now and then stopped short and applied their little pink noses to the ground, sniffing. If the scent appeared promising, the lucky discoverer at once started digging with the greatest energy and an excitement which increased as the orifice grew larger. From time to time the digging was interrupted and the nose applied to the ground, to make sure; and then the work was resumed with renewed activity. Occasionally the digger was shoved off by her mate, — never, however, by Rikki-Tikki, who, like most male mammals and birds, always gave precedence to the ladies, — when a short tussle ensued, and the burrowing was taken up again by the winner of the contest. Sometimes it happened that, after repeated aspirations, the digging was abruptly discontinued, the hunter having come to the conclusion that the fortress was tenantless.

But when this was not the case, as soon as the size of the hole allowed it, the long-clawed hand and arm were inserted into it to the elbow, and a most careful

and thorough groping began inside, guided by the sense of touch only, with what sensations for the unfortunate tarantula one may imagine: feelings which must be identical with those of the boy in Wells's *War of the Worlds*, when the mechanic tentacle of the Martians was groping for a victim inside the hut where he was hiding.

And then, when the presence of the prey was ascertained beyond a doubt, came the dénouement, as quick as lightning. One sudden backward movement of the groping foreleg, and the spider, jerked out of the hole, came flying in an arc to a foot or two beyond the aperture; before it had time to recover from its surprise and indignation it was seized, and its dangerous mandibles crushed with a single bite. Then the hunter sat down, and deliberately, and with evident gusto, munched the fat body.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that animals which stand as high in the scale of sentient beings as zebra mongooses are addicted to no other pleasures than those of the table. They are also passionately fond of music, and they love perfumes.

It sometimes happened that, carried away by the ardor of the chase, they turned a deaf ear on me when I started to return to my camp. On these occasions I always resorted to the same expedient. One of the two "boys" who usually accompanied me in order to watch the mongooses, which were apt to stray, was sent back to the camp for his "limba," the native guitar, which he started playing as soon as he had come back to our hunting-party. The moment he struck the first chords, the three mongooses desisted

from whatever pursuit they happened to be engaged in and ran toward him, and then, as we all turned homeward, followed close on his heels, tumbling one over the other, and never left him until the music ceased! We must have looked a funny procession! First the boy, pinching the strings of his instrument; then the three eager mongooses, the white man, the two fox-terriers, the other native, all walking single file on the narrow path; I imagine the surprise which a European fresh from Europe — nothing of course surprises an African — would have felt if he had suddenly encountered us in the forest. No doubt he would have thought that he was facing a colored reincarnation of the Pied Piper of Hamelin!

That they are fond of smelling perfumes mongooses show by the pleasure which they manifest when they inhale the odor of flowers, frequently standing up on their hind legs and stretching themselves in order to reach to the height of the blossoms.

The favorite smell, however, is civet. Civet cats are very frequent in the Myombo forests of Nyasaland, where one often hears at night their monotonous call as they walk about in search of those berries and fruits which constitute their principal food. They have the curious habit of getting rid of their surplus wealth by rubbing themselves against the foot of trees; such spots are conspicuous by the odor of civet which emanates from them and permeates the atmosphere in their immediate neighborhood.

To strike one of these places on our wanderings was, to my mongooses, an occasion of excitement and pleasure. It almost seemed as if they became intoxi-

cated by the powerful perfume; they would rush to the anointed tree, embrace it and rub themselves against it with all the appearance of the greatest enjoyment, and it was only with difficulty that they could be prevailed upon to abandon it.

Unlike cats and dogs, mongooses also love the smell of tobacco. Both Maskini and Mshenzi rolled about on my knees with delight when I blew the smoke of my cigar at them, and tried to catch the clouds of smoke with their paws; one of the favorite tricks of Rikki-Tikki was to seize unexpectedly the burning cigar in my mouth, with his half-prehensile fingers, jump to the ground with it, roll it about until the fire had gone out, and then tear it to pieces and wallow on the débris. But woe to me if I attempted to recover the cigar once it had been taken into his possession!

So far, however, from indiscriminately favoring all kinds of perfume, my pets were, on the contrary, fastidious in their choice. I once bought, for their special benefit, a bottle of strong scent of the kind which is sold in native stores and is in great demand with Negroes. They treated it with the utmost contempt, turning away with an expression of disgust after one inhalation.

Zebra mongooses are strongly individualized; they each have a distinct personality and differ from one another probably as much as human beings, although certain qualities and defects, as, for instance, courage, and a quick temper, are common to all.

In their tastes they vary as much as in their qualities. No two individuals will favor exactly the

same diet or prefer the same dishes. All my mongooses, for instance, liked pork and chicken, but only one of them ate beef, and only one goats' meat. Maskini doted on tadpoles, which neither Rikki-Tikki nor Mshenzi would touch.

The same applies to their sympathies and antipathies. Rikki-Tikki loathed all Europeans except myself, and attacked them savagely when he had the opportunity, so that I had to shut him up every time I saw a visitor approaching my dwelling. When, the visitor gone but still visible in the distance, I released Rikki-Tikki from his confinement, he would rush to a place whence he could overlook the road and stand there, head erect, uttering savage screams, and stamping one of his forefeet on the ground, in a peculiar way he had, which appeared very human. But to all natives, without exception, he behaved in the most friendly manner.

The Sultana Mshenzi was just the reverse. She greeted all white men with the greatest cordiality but could not stand natives, not even those of my "boys" whom she had known for years. They had to be constantly on the lookout when moving about, for, when they passed too close to her she immediately made a dash at their feet, an idiosyncrasy which, alas! brought about her untimely end.

And Maskini, the second female, who had the sweetest of tempers, entertained no color-prejudices of any kind!

It was interesting to observe the behavior toward one another of the mongooses according to their sex. Two male mongooses, except when they have been

brought up together from childhood, will not tolerate each other, and keep on fighting like stags until they are separated. The manner of these contests is very peculiar; they wrestle, shoulder against shoulder, applying all their energy, apparently, to no other purpose than that of making the antagonist lose ground. But these seemingly harmless efforts, which are carried on with the greatest patience, are from time to time interrupted by a sudden, fierce seizing-hold with the teeth on the soft part of the nose, or the lips, or the nape of the neck, where severe wounds are inflicted. I have found it quite impossible to accustom to one another two adult male mongooses.

Female mongooses also fight, but never without a special reason, and their battles are much less fierce than those of males, being almost entirely restricted to the shoulder-to-shoulder wrestling just mentioned. Very rarely do they make use of their teeth. What they lack in dash and violence, however, these fights make up in dogged pertinacity, for they may last for hours!

Whenever Mshenzi and Maskini engaged in one of these wrestling-matches, Rikki-Tikki used to behave in a very characteristic manner. It was quite obvious that he took an intense and painful interest in the contest, but he was far too much of a sportsman to interfere. He would, on these occasions, approach without haste to a point a couple of yards from the two litigants, and then watch them, his eyes riveted on them, standing quite still. His expression, while he did so, was incredibly human. He looked puzzled, shocked, and sometimes I thought I saw a slight

flicker of amusement pass in his gaze. After standing and watching like this for some considerable time, he would move away abruptly, follow his own occupations for a while, then come back straight to where the fight was proceeding, and again stand and watch with the same half-sorrowful, half-whimsical expression; and in this way he continued to behave until the two antagonists became tired and separated.

As a rule, these fights originated in an attempt on the part of one of the two ladies to seize a plaything of which the other had taken possession.

All mongooses, and the sedate and worldly-wise Rikki-Tikki made no exception to this rule, are passionately fond of seizing hold of small objects which they use for their national game of Fives, which I have described above in connection with snails and eggs. For they do not use foodstuffs only in this manner. They take the greatest delight in propelling any small, hard object against a solid surface, with a strength which is prodigious for their size, and in seeing it rebound to a distance of many yards, when it is eagerly searched for — this is also part of the entertainment — and then used again and again for the same purpose.

As it is quite impossible to recover by force, without being severely bitten, an object of which a mongoose has taken possession, one had to keep carefully out of their reach all those things, like, for instance, watches, or liqueur glasses, which would have suffered if they had been used as high-velocity ammunition. They were awfully keen on getting hold of small coins, and used to ransack all my pockets for odd shillings

and pennies, inserting their hands into each one of them in turn. As soon as they found what they wanted, they brought it to the surface with their fingers, seized it with their teeth, jumped to the ground, and made off. Maskini and Mshenzi I had to watch on those occasions, for there was always the possibility of the coins getting lost if they were taken too far away or into remote corners.

Not so, however, where Rikki-Tikki was concerned! For, strange to say, that little creature, which had been bred in the wilderness and belonged to an order as remote from human influence as are lions, leopards, or tigers, possessed an innate sense of honesty, such as is only rarely found in the first representative of the Primates, who is still supposed by some to be the fountainhead of all the virtues. No matter how far out of sight and to what distance from the hut or tent Rikki-Tikki had taken the borrowed coin, he invariably brought it back of his own accord, when his game was finished, and dropped it on the ground in front of me, just looking up to me for a moment afterward to see if I had noticed it.

Needless to say, there had never been the slightest attempt on my part to teach Rikki-Tikki to retrieve. What a mongoose does, it does *proprio moto*. It is easier to train a hyena than to train a mongoose, for there exists no creature in the world more impatient than the latter of coercion or interference. I have been snarled at by mongooses because I had tried to interfere with their mates while they were near; and, once when a young mongoose, for some reason, got angry with me and attempted to bite me, another,

standing by, jumped toward it and shoved it off, growling.

I have known only one other mongoose which shared that peculiarity of Rikki-Tikki's — to return property which it had commandeered. I did not keep it very long, for unfortunately it died before it was full-grown. It must be added, however, that Rikki-Tikki was already over two years old when I first became aware of his habit of returning things borrowed for use in his favorite sport.

Mongoosees take a long time before they are full-grown, and they do not attain maturity until they are two years of age. None of the mongoosees which are offered for sale on the coast are full-grown, — just as in the case of grivet monkeys, — and I do not remember ever having even seen a full-grown mongoose in Zanzibar, where so many used to be kept. They are probably all killed before they attain full size, either because the natives fear the temper of the adults or because they want their skins. The long time they take to grow up — so much longer than do cats — would seem to indicate that, in congenial surroundings and under favorable circumstances, they might live to a considerable age. Rikki-Tikki was still in the prime of life — nearly eight years old — when he became ill and died.

To my great regret, all my mongoosees have remained without issue. I have never heard of zebra mongoosees breeding in captivity, however great may have been the liberty of movement which they enjoyed. My own observations in this respect have been confirmed by all the natives whom I have

consulted on the subject. My pets were absolutely free to roam about as they liked, wherever I lived at the time, the only restrictions on their movements being occasioned by my anxiety lest they should stray and be killed by natives. Yet this moderate measure of interference was sufficient to prevent them from breeding. No doubt their ideas of liberty differ from ours; however great may be, in our own minds, the freedom which they enjoy, they themselves still look upon it as captivity.

I regretted this circumstance all the more, as both Mshenzi and Maskini gave me evidence enough of the strength of their maternal instinct. I happened to keep, at one time, a female Nyasaland cat, a breed of domestic cats indigenous to Nyasaland and Zambesia, which in appearance is indistinguishable from that of the wild bush-cat. It was a great event in my household, when Shri, one day, brought inside for approval her first litter, consisting of three kittens marked exactly like herself, which she had, so far, kept hidden in the thatch of the roof. The two female mongooses, when they saw them, went beside themselves with joy. It was the latent maternal instinct suddenly awakened, manifesting itself in a touching and pathetic way. They put their arms round the necks of the kittens, and licked and fondled them as if they had been their own, and when I had prepared a place for Shri and her brood, they remained with the latter, and were not to be persuaded to leave the room. In the beginning I felt some anxiety, because I was not quite sure what unexpected turn these demonstrations of

affection might suddenly take. But my apprehensions disappeared as minute after minute passed without bringing any marked alteration in their quality.

I had also feared that Shri, who could be terribly fierce on occasion, and who, moreover, was considerably larger than the mongooses, might object to their endeavors to monopolize her progeny. But in this, as in so many other ways, she was perfectly surprising. Wiser than her master, she did not for a second show the slightest doubt as to the benevolent character of the endearments which her babies had to endure. After a day or two, she even came to the conclusion that nothing could be more convenient than this unceasing attendance of Mshenzi and Mas-kini on her family; for she allowed herself, between fulfillments of her unavoidable maternal ministrations, the relaxation of frequent and prolonged strolls in the neighborhood.

Rikki-Tikki, as might be supposed, took no part in this cajoling, but, after one coldly surprised glance at the newcomers, ceased to take any notice of them.

As long as the kittens were too small to leave the room, the interest with which they inspired the two lady mongooses never flagged, and included all their actions. I shall always remember the day when one of the kittens, for the first time, gave voice. Both mongooses began to scream in a way which is common to them all when anything gives them pleasurable excitement, a demonstration which caused two Negroes, who witnessed it, to roar with laughter.

Strange to say from the day when the young cats first followed their mother outside, they forfeited all

the affection of their two friends, and were henceforth ignored.

The reference to the "eternal feminine" brings me, reluctantly, to the mention of the least pleasant side of my long and affectionate friendship with Rikki-Tikki. Alas! he, like elephants, stags, and camels, became "musth" every year at the beginning of the rainy season — a most trying ordeal for myself and my household, but particularly for myself. He had three or four fits of musthness during the first half of the rainy season, at intervals of about a month's time, and each fit lasted nine days.

Rudyard Kipling's mahout says about his musth elephant: "It is me he wants to kill, because he loves me most of all" — or words to that effect; and the same was the case with Rikki-Tikki when he was musth. All the passion, rage, and hatred of which he was capable were then concentrated upon me, and me alone, while he left my native servants unmolested. As is the case with lions, leopards, and the large birds of prey, zebra mongooses are monogamous, and the amorous passion of Rikki-Tikki, whenever he had been hit by Cupid's arrow, had for its object one only of his two companions, and that one always the same through all the years — Mshenzi, the negrophobe.

All his efforts, during these periods of trial, tended to one object — to keep me and the Sultana separated. These fits of temporary insanity did not appear all at once in their full strength; they evolved gradually, from what was, during the first two or three days, merely a display of bad humor and ill

temper, into the maniacal fury of the end. At that time he tried to prevent his consort from taking any food at all, so that the poor creature had to subsist on small scraps which I threw to her, and which she managed to pick up on the run! Several times I tried to feed her while I was sitting on a table with my legs drawn up; but Othello would have none of this and chased her away mercilessly when she attempted to stop. On one of these occasions he jumped up and caught my hand and fastened his pointed fangs into it like a ferret, so that I had the greatest difficulty in shaking him off, the flesh being badly lacerated in the action. On another occasion he tore away with his teeth a large piece of leather from a mosquito-boot which I was wearing. Fortunately he just failed to reach the foot.

Whenever I happened to live in a house, I kept the two shut up in a separate room as long as Rikki-Tikki's *dementia amorosa* lasted; but this was impracticable when I was camping, and under the latter circumstances — a stockade in the open being excluded from fear of leopards — there was nothing to do except to be incessantly on the lookout during the day, and, during the night, to shut them both up in a cage into which they had to be decoyed.

I think I hear some people saying: "I cannot understand how you could put up with all this! I should have killed the brute if I had been you!" To which I make reply: "I do not think you would have, not even if you are a professional slayer of elephants. Not if Rikki-Tikki had shared your fortunes, as he had mine, with unwavering devotion and

loyalty, year after year — the short intervals of ‘musth’ excluded. Not if you had ever seen him when, the period of his trial over, he crawled up timidly to my chair, and then, after some anxious hesitation, having noticed no discouraging gesture, he climbed up on my knees, and thrust his cold little nose under the bosom of my shirt, and nestled close to me — humility and apology and affection personified. Of course you would have forgiven him every time, and every time your mutual friendship would have grown the stronger for the ordeal through which it has passed.”

During the remainder of the year, Rikki-Tikki showed no preference for either of his two companions, and he often used to play with one or the other after the manner of cats or dogs. But there could be no doubt that the sweet-tempered Maskini recognized Mshenzi’s position as favorite and meekly submitted, for whenever she was engaged in playing with Rikki-Tikki and the Augusta approached, she immediately ceded her place to the latter and went quietly away, while Mshenzi herself accepted this self-effacement as her due.

One of the most wonderful attributes of zebra mongooses is their *copia verborum*. They dispose of so many different sounds, uttered in so great a variety of intonations, and with such convincing expressiveness of joy, of sorrow, of anger, of regret and disappointment, of expectation, of longing, of desire, of surprise, of anxiety and fear, that it amounts to a language. Unlike any other mammals known to me, they converse at a distance, even when they are out of sight of

one another, as, for instance, when they happen to be in two different rooms.

They often talk in their sleep, and Rikki-Tikki, from time to time, gave vent, while sound asleep, to an endless lament, a series of long-drawn though not unharmonious wails in a rising and falling cadence, expressive of heart-rending sorrow and distress, painful to listen to in the silence of the night.

Yet another curious peculiarity of theirs is, that they look, intently, and with evident interest, at stretches of country lying in front of them, when they find themselves at the top of a hill or of a mountain where they have not previously been. Their eyesight is marvelously sharp, and they detect birds of prey — the only thing in the world which they fear, apart from leopards and servals — at incredible altitudes in the sky.

Those wild creatures of the bush are capable of feelings of affection and love as strong as those of men.

When Rikki-Tikki was brought to me as a youngster still far from maturity, two years before the appearance on the scene of Mshenzi and Maskini, I owned a nearly full-grown female mongoose, a charming and affectionate creature whose name was Mzuri, and the two became great friends. About a year later Mzuri was killed accidentally, as he said, by a native who threw a stone at her, because he wanted to prevent her from following him out of the camp. Rikki-Tikki was not present when this happened, nor did he see the body of his dead comrade.

During the first twenty-four hours after her dis-

appearance he gave no signs of worry or uneasiness, obviously thinking that she was somewhere about and would soon turn up. On the second day, however, he began to show symptoms of distress, and started searching about the camp and in its vicinity, standing still to listen from time to time. As his search proved fruitless, his unrest developed into a perfect fever. He extended the field of his investigations far from the camp, diving into every hole among the rocks and into every thicket, and all the while he was calling her in the most affectionate tone of voice, as if he thought that she was in hiding somewhere and that he must persuade her to come back. These untiring efforts lasted from morning till evening, when he returned into the tent, quite exhausted, to sleep with me as was his habit.

Once, during the night, there was a noise heard near the tent, as of some small animal passing or approaching. Never to my dying day shall I forget the cry of joy which Rikki-Tikki gave when he jumped down from my bed and out of the tent — only to crawl back very slowly and disconsolately a few minutes later, to regain his post by my side.

I had, by that time, decided to return to Mwakete, where I had spent a former rainy season and built a larger shed, almost a house, which I had used as my headquarters. My return journey to that place took me over country which I had not yet passed, and, owing no doubt to these new and strange surroundings and to the excitement of travel, Rikki-Tikki's grief, during that short journey, which took me about five

days, appeared to be subsiding. I began to feel hope that he would at last recover from it. But I was, alas, destined to be disappointed.

Both Rikki-Tikki and Mzuri had been in Mwakete with me when I had lived there last, and, as soon as we arrived, the familiar surroundings kindled afresh, in the former's mind, the memory of his lost friend. He again began his hopeless quest. It was not the habit of my mongooses, as a rule, to leave the immediate vicinity of my camp, unless they were following me, and that Rikki-Tikki should have departed from this habit in his anxiety to find his vanished companion shows how profound was his affection for her. Once, as I had lost trace of him, I sent after him a search-party of boys, who found him at a distance of over a mile from Mwakete!

Six weeks passed before he appeared to resign himself to the inevitable, and I succeeded at about that time in procuring another lady mongoose to keep him company; but she was still very young, and although the two became friendly, she did not obliterate altogether from his memory the image of his first love.

After the lapse of six months, I left Mwakete for Buanji, a country situated at the northern end of the Livingstone Range. In the course of this journey my safari crossed a former track of mine, where I had passed a year before, when Mzuri was still alive. We camped at the same place where we had camped on that first occasion. After the tent had been pitched, and Rikki-Tikki released out of his traveling-box, he became restless, started ferreting about in one direc-

tion and another, and finally took up the search again with such intensity that, as I intended to continue my march on the following morning and feared that I might be delayed if he strayed, I had to shut him up again in his box.

After the death of Mshenzi, six years later, — she had been preceded in death by Maskini, — it took much longer ere he realized that she had gone from his life forever. I did all that was humanly possible to find a successor for her, but I failed — and Rikki-Tikki, once he had given up hope, refused all food, and died, worn to a skeleton. A few nights before the end he uttered, while asleep, in an inexpressibly tender and wistful tone of voice, the call which he used toward her during her lifetime.

The affection of mongooses for friends who belong to the human race is as great as that of dogs. My mongooses, when I had to dispense with their company on leaving the house or camp, had to be prevented by force or stratagem from following me, for nothing else would deter them from doing so, even in a pitch-dark night, although they are diurnal animals. When, from my camp, I could be seen at a distance on my return, they would run hundreds of yards to meet me, and when they reached me and I stopped to greet them, lie down and lay their heads on my feet as a sign of submission and love.

Although zebra mongooses are fond of bathing and like to splash about with water in a shallow tub, they do not as a rule enter deep water of their own accord, good swimmers though they are in an emergency. Yet I have been told about two of them which jumped

after their master, a carpenter of the Berlin Lutheran mission, into a deep pool.

In the house, they show in many small ways, by act and speech, their affection for their master, and the pleasure which they take in his presence.

My affection for Rikki-Tikki turned almost to idolatry after a bad accident which I had in a wild part of Ukinga, where I happened to spend eight months without meeting a single European. He was the only mongoose in my possession at that time, indeed, he was my only friend, as Jerry, my faithful old fox terrier, had been killed by native curs a short time before. During the six weeks which my illness lasted, and which I passed almost entirely on my bed, as I was unable to move without feeling excruciating pains, Rikki-Tikki voluntarily shared my confinement and never left my presence except for a few moments at a time.

I feel not a shadow of a doubt that he knew that something was wrong with me and that he remained with me day and night for that reason. He gave up his habit of running about in search of beetles and other creatures, a habit in which he always indulged when I was well, and which he took up again as soon as I had recovered.

Apparently insignificant actions sometimes throw more light on the psyche of man and beast than a more spectacular behavior. I should class within the former category the fact that my mongooses, when they wanted to be scratched, — a proceeding which they greatly liked, — intimated their wish to me by softly stroking my chin with their claws.

As long as they were young, when they felt hungry they had a habit of climbing on my knees and pointing with their own mouths at mine, in a marked and quite unmistakable way, until I "tumbled" to their meaning.

Their skill in opening complicated fastenings, including bolts and hooks, was astonishing. No box or basket was safe from their investigations for any length of time. And although it takes days for a cat or a dog to discover the proper way to get inside a mosquito curtain, mongooses find out at once that what they have to do is to lift it and pass underneath.

In the preceding pages I have attempted to show that zebra mongooses possess some of the qualities which we admire most in men. One may safely assume that if, while remaining psychically unchanged, they walked about exclusively on their hind legs and had no caudal appendage, some society for the protection of aborigines would include them in the number of its protégés. This being, however, not the case, they are left exposed, without effective interference in their favor on anybody's part, to unrestrained persecution by the peoples among whom their lot is cast. The natives of East and Central Africa hunt them with packs of curs for their flesh and for their skin, without any necessity whatsoever; for those tribes which are chiefly responsible for this wholesale extermination are rich in goats and in cattle, and may besides, in many parts, hunt game to their hearts' content.

It is with a bitter feeling that I bear testimony, in conclusion, to the melancholy fact that the missions

do nothing to prevent this wanton destruction of highly gifted, sensitive, and harmless creatures.

Neither must I omit to mention, O Christians! that the *Herpestes zebra* has one ally, one only: the True Believer does not hunt it. Allah Akhbar!

VIII

THE NYASALAND CAT

NYASALAND is overrun by rats, which in some places amount to a calamity. I know villages in which the inhabitants wrap up their toes at night, to prevent them from being nibbled by these rodents.

With characteristic thoughtlessness the natives continue to wage destructive war against all those wild creatures which prey on rats and mice, as for instance owls, genettes, mongooses, weasels, gorillas and so on. These animals, they say, endanger their poultry, ignoring the fact that a mongoose or a genetie probably kills a hundred rats for each chicken which it catches.

To a limited extent, cats constitute an exception to this "killing the goose with the golden eggs" policy. They are eaten by native hyenas, — Wangoni, Wangulu, Achipeta, — but among the superior Wayao and Wanyanja cats are almost as much appreciated to-day as they were in Wales a thousand years ago, and belong, in districts inhabited by these races, to that exiguous class of warm-blooded animals whose life is not one of constant persecution and starvation. Although, of course, natives will no more think of feeding their cats than they think of feeding their dogs, the fortunate cats have, over the latter, the advantage that their own special larder of mice and rats remains always well supplied.

Like Siam, Persia, the Isle of Man, and a few other favored countries, Nyasaland has a speciality in cats. So far, it has received only passing and somewhat contemptuous recognition on the part of a few explorers, like Sir Harry Johnston and M. Manghan, the author of *Zambesia*. Historically, these cats probably represent a bastard race, descended from the European cat introduced by the early settlers and from the indigenous wild-cat, *felis caffra*, to which latter they owe their external appearance and much of their "morale."

As these more or less domesticated cats have constant access to the forest, where they meet their wild relations and where most of them are said to return for good when they advance in age, this intermingling keeps going on, purifying and specializing the breed. One never knows, when kittens are brought for sale, whether they were born in a native village or found in the forest. Although they vary in size when they are full-grown, and although some are distinctly "cobby" while others remain lean, the markings are pretty equal in most individuals, and very beautiful, the ground color of the coat being a yellowish brown, while the legs and the neck and head are striped, the sides spotted, and the tail ringled — jet-black. The latter, which does not taper, has a black tip besides.

That Nyasaland is a land of cats, I had, by the way, already been told by natives on the Kilimanjaro, a thousand miles to the north.

It has been my misfortune to own several of these felines, and I can say that, of all my dumb friends,

they have been the most diffident and the most susceptible; any young mongoose, genette, serval cat, or lion, caught in the wilds, will become tamer than these supposedly domestic animals. They are incredibly touchy, and the slightest rebuke alienates them for ever.

One of them, a beautiful young tomcat called Huzoor, was most affectionate with me, while he was extremely shy with other people and full of distrust of my terriers, who showed him nothing but affection, having known him since his birth. After he was full-grown he kept away from my camp all day, turning up in the evening, when, as he knew, I always kept for him something that I thought he might like. Then gradually he reduced his intercourse with me to short visits, choosing for them the, to me, most inconvenient time, the middle of the night. It was generally after I had enjoyed a few hours' sleep that he came in through the *œil de bœuf* at the back of my hut, jumped on to my bed with low, inarticulate sounds of affection, took hold of my hands, and started playing! I tolerated this for many nights in succession, but once, feeling rather sleepy, I pushed him off — by no means violently. I never saw him again!

I passed through a similar experience with a second Huzoor four years later, although in this instance I have not the faintest rebuke to reproach myself with. He was just as handsome as the first Huzoor, though larger, and curiously like him in character. From being a familiar and confiding kitten he developed into an abnormally shy individual. To me he showed much affection, but whenever another European

called — a very rare occasion — he flew into the bush and kept away for the remainder of the day.

My fox terriers he ignored; to my larger bitch, a cross between a collie and a jackal, he sometimes showed some friendliness; but her daughter, who worshipped him and, as soon as she caught sight of him, charged him like a rhino, with no other intention than to lick his nose in frantic joy, he simply loathed! Yet so mild was his natural disposition that he never once lost his temper with her, but contented himself with moving her head away with his paw and retiring to a place of safety with a comic expression of disgust in his face.

Just like his namesake, he finally ceased to enter the bungalow in which I was living at the time, except by night and through the cats' hole. On these occasions I always had to put away my cheroot when he found me smoking, for he strongly objected to the smell of tobacco.

Long after he had ceased to enter the house by daylight, he was still keeping in the neighborhood, and we occasionally had clandestine meetings in the bush, when he would show signs of real pleasure, welcoming me in a ridiculously tiny voice for so large a tomcat, following me about, and rubbing himself against me as long as I was alone.

To my profound regret, he too at last disappeared for good, strangled to death, as I have every reason to believe, in the noose of a trap laid by some Wagoni who were infesting the neighborhood.

I have also possessed, besides these two Nyasaland toms, one female, of hateful memory, although I had

been very fond of her at one time. Reference to her is made in the chapter on warrior ants and that on mongooses.

Shri was the mother of the first Huzoor, and in probability the great-grandmother of the second, but much more domesticated than both during the time which she spent in my household, to the tragic end.

Nothing in her indicated, in the beginning, the fierceness of passion of which she was capable. She was a tiny mite when she was brought to me by a native. Judging from her behavior at the beginning of our acquaintance, she must have been a relation of Mark Twain's coconut-eating cat. My first offering to her was, of course, milk. This she refused to touch, and she continued to do so as long as our connection lasted. Roast chicken she also declined to eat, so I began to fear that she had been weaned too young. It was then that, while I was having luncheon, she jumped on to the table from my lap, and with the greatest appetite, began to eat boiled cabbage from my plate. Presently fruit was brought, and she filled herself with papaw! Both to cabbage and to papaw she remained partial as long as I knew her, but I soon found out that, although she discarded chicken, she loved both beef and goat's meat.

Unlike the two Huzoors, she lived with my terriers, whom she saw grow up, on the best of terms, and I think it is due to their influence that, except for her peculiar taste in food, she behaved, in her everyday life, more or less like a well-bred European cat.

Occasionally she would disappear for whole weeks at a stretch, but she invariably found herself, on her

return into the routine of my household, as easily as if she had not been living, during her absence, like a wild animal in the bush.

At regular intervals she presented me with a litter of kittens which were marked like their mother and, as they grew up, by their wildness bore evidence to the fact that their father belonged to a social milieu different from their mother's. There appeared to be no reason why Shri should not remain an appreciated member of my household until her death or mine.

And then, one morning, there came the tide in the affairs of cats and men which brought that idyll to a miserable end. It came in the shape of a young genet, the most charming creature which I have ever called my own, a convincing illustration of Brehm's assertion that no more graceful cats exist than they.

Nyasa — such was the name I gave her as a tribute to her beautiful native country — belonged to the smallest variety of genets, being a so-called "tawny" genet, in which the gray fur is slightly suffused with yellow, while the marks are not black, but a rich dark-brown sherry color.

She was scarcely bigger than a rat when she was brought, tightly packed, and bound besides, in a kind of funnel made of banana leaves. As in the case of Shri, I feared at first that she would die, she looked so fragile; but she took kindly to a diet of milk sweetened with sugar and not many days had passed, after I had given her the run of the house, before she killed and ate her first mouse.

From the moment when Nyasa began to run about,

Shri, who was four times her size, behaved in the strangest of manners. It was obvious that Shri disliked her. Whenever the genetie, who wanted to make friends, approached her, she hurriedly got out of the way, and once or twice I thought I noticed in the expression of her eyes that look of the feline — it is the same in man — in which the murdering spirit has been kindled. Any misgivings which I may have felt, however, yielded before my firm — and mistaken — conviction that cats do not hurt each other. I had even heard it asserted that a leopard will not kill a house cat.

Well, Shri disappeared for several weeks, as was her wont, and during her absence I grew more and more fond of Nyasa, who was my constant companion, shared my couch when she was not hunting, teased the mongooses in a good-natured manner, and by her agility, her grace, her affectionate ways, was a source of constant interest and pleasure. She had a habit of going to sleep, in the daytime, on the top of my mosquito-curtain, and whenever I came into the hut she used to stand erect, opening her arms to paw the air by way of welcome, while she showed her pink tongue in her half-opened black mouth, which gave her a curious and unmistakably smiling, though faintly diabolic, expression.

In this attitude she always reminded me of a picture which I had seen of the great Sarah, showing the famous actress, on the occasion of a jubilee, greeting, from the first floor of the Grand Hotel in Paris, a deputation of the Press which had assembled, to do her homage, in the hall at the foot of the flight of stairs.

Then, on an accursed day, Shri came back. Her distrust of Nyasa showed even stronger now than in the beginning. Once, when I returned from a walk, the latter failed to greet me in the usual way. I thought she looked frightened, and when I came near her I noticed, in her under-jaw a slight incision. Yet, stricken with blindness as I was, I never connected her indisposition with the cat, and when, after a couple of days, she began to feed again as usual and to run about, I forgot the incident.

One morning Shri gave birth to three kittens, but, instead of hiding them somewhere outside at first, as was her wont, she carried them into the hut and deposited them in the basket of my terriers, evidently under the impression that they were safest there; and when the dogs refused to share their bed with the intruders and jumped out, she took them away again and carried them one by one into the basket of the mongooses.

One or two days later, feeling unwell, I closed the door of my sleeping-hut for the night, a thing I very rarely did.

Toward morning I heard something of a scuffle going on outside and the dogs became restless. As they did not bark, however, I did not get up; but when, a little later, one of my boys came to my door and called me, I stepped out, and there was Nyasa, with her lower jaw broken and her tongue torn out by the roots, still alive!

She had to be killed, and I should have killed Shri then and there, if it had not been for her young.

Instead, I packed the whole family into a cage

and sent it to a friend of mine, a planter who lived a few miles away who had complained to me about a plague of rats.

A month later, Shri came back, alone and emaciated, and when my dogs ran out to meet her, she flew at them in a fit of boundless rage. I could only conclude from this that her kittens had been killed by the brothers of my own dogs, who belonged to that planter and resembled them.

For some time she continued to live about my premises, in a permanent state of war with Cashel and Petitcriou, who, resenting this inexplicable change of attitude, in their turn took the offensive. She then retired into the forest, and never again came into the camp. Once I heard from natives that she was living, with a new family, in an earth-hole at a distance of about half a mile.

Exactly one year later, once in the early morning, attracted by the frantic barkings of the dogs, I went out, and, not two hundred yards from my place I saw her, flattened on a branch high up in a tree, looking words of Dante at my camp. I called my dogs away, and that was the last that I have seen of Shri, as great in crime as in maternal love.

It was Scheitlin, I think, who wrote, "*Auch die Thiere haben ein Schicksal*" — The animals too have their destiny.

IX

APES AND MONKEYS

WE may make abstraction, on the one side, from the controversies of biologists, none of whom, even the hottest partisan of any particular school, can claim to have so far given an irrefutable and conclusive solution of the question of human evolution and, on the other, from the statements in Genesis, themselves scarcely definitive in the light of references to "beasts" contained in other parts of the Old Testament — unfortunately, the authors of the Gospel were so absorbed by the main issue that they had no time left to comment on circumstances of the "dumb" creation, except in two single instances, one of which might easily be constructed by the Gentile into an admission of being *post factum* accessory to some of the most cruel deeds of mankind, performed chiefly in the interest of museums and Paris modistes. But if, in a word, we can see our way to accept neither the verdict of science in its present state nor that of Revelation, we shall have to confess, if we are at all honest, that the right definition of what really constitutes the essence of our humanity and its superior value in antithesis to animal nature, is not by any means so easy as the majority of people imagine.

The reply to the question naturally depends largely on the standpoint of the teacher in regard to intelligence, art, morality, and sentiment, and to the pre-

ponderance which he gives to either of these four realms in his estimation of sentient beings. To some, the highest type of humanity is represented by people like Marconi or Edison or Madame Curie or Bismarck or Einstein or Marshal Foch or the late Pierpont Morgan; to others all these types appear as nothing compared with Judith or Socrates or Charlotte Corday or Regulus or Florence Nightingale.

Most people, indeed, will probably look upon those belonging to the second group as more truly representative of "human" nature and as standing nearer to themselves than those of the first group. And yet, with all the respect, admiration, and veneration due to the types of the second group, do they not stand just an infinitesimally small distance nearer to the "animal" than the great inventors, scientists, and politicians? And that on account of those very peculiarities which make the majority of people feel them more human, and love them more in consequence, than those others?

There is surely more affinity between Madame Melba and a nightingale than between Madame Melba and Isaac Newton!

What makes us feel "we" with others — to borrow Rudyard Kipling's Abbey phrase — is not the possession of the same alphabet or of the same kind of motor, but the experience of similar emotions.

When we hear that a mongoose died of grief because it was separated from its mate, or that a cat sacrificed her life for her young, or that a bullfinch fell down dead from joy at the return of his master from a journey, we are more powerfully affected than

when we hear about the discovery of a treasure chamber or of the microbe of anthrax.

Probably very few creatures exist in which we do not find part of that something which makes us "we," if we only take the trouble to look for it. I shall never forget a small sweet-water crab who, many years ago, before the Great War, was my neighbor at the bottom of a gorge near Lake Nyasa, where he lived in one of the crystal pools of a dried-up river bed. He was so incredibly human, with his weirdly intelligent tentacle-eyes and his habit of eating with his fingers. I had seen him eating some of the rests of my breakfast, — I am not certain that it was not tinned crab packed in Boston, — which my boy had thrown away near the pool, and from that time on I started feeding him and he became remarkably tame, leaving the shallow bottom of his home as soon as he saw me approach with his dinner. When he put his fingers into his mouth, staring me straight into the eyes all the time, he always reminded me of a fat little boy sucking his thumb, and I felt almost inclined to give him a slight slap and to say: "Now don't you forget your manners, my boy!"

There must have been a tragedy in that crab's life, for he was the only one in that pool; its other inhabitants were a few fish and water insects. Perhaps he was waiting for the rains to reestablish a connection with other pools and other crabs, or perhaps he may have been marooned for some evil deed.

We have been told by Darwin how phenomenally intelligent are the crabs of the Cocos Islands. I have had no opportunity to judge of my little friend's

industry, but I took it as a sufficient proof of his acumen that he so quickly accepted as genuine my professions of sympathy, and that he also very soon realized that he had nothing to fear from my fox terrier, and that there was no need, when the latter came near, to interrupt his sidewise walk and to shrink into himself, lifting his claws like a shield in self-defense. I feel quite convinced that he looked upon me as much more congenial to him than the fish which shared his pool.

It is difficult to make searching observations on the psyche of small creatures accustomed to an "ambient" differing from our own, without inflicting discomfort or pain, which is not always agreeable to one not scientifically trained; but it is different as regards large mammals of habits more closely resembling our own, whom one may meet in bush and forest. In this respect I remember a romantic incident in the life of two baboons, which brought very near to me the alleged fact of our common descent.

I was camping at the time in the Pare hills, a range which runs almost due east from the Kilimanjaro, but changes its name to that of Usambara before it reaches the Indian Ocean.

In my neighborhood there lived a large herd of baboons which, at every hour of the day and frequently during the night wakened all the echoes of the mountain with their Dantesque barks, shouts, and screams. They had, as I soon found out, one favorite locality for their "barazas," to which they were in the habit of repairing every forenoon. This was a kind of circus, floored with white sand and

strewn with boulders in the — at that season — almost dry bed of a stream descending from the top of the ridge in the direction of Lake Jipe, which lay like a drawn sword at the foot of the range, along the frontier between British and German East Africa.

I bought provisions of manioc, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes in the nearest village and, having forestalled my cousins in the circus, I disposed my bounties on the boulders in a circle as if for sale, and then sat down in the centre and waited for their arrival. When they came, they did not evidence by the faintest sign or gesture any surprise at my presence, for baboons, it seems, share the opinion of ancient Romans and Red Indians that manifestations of astonishment are undignified and show a lack of self-respect. Those whom the impetus of their canter had brought near me galloped on with ever so slight a swerve to the right or left and just one casual look, taking in the situation at a glance, and the whole herd remained in the vicinity and went about its business as if I had not existed, the mothers engaging in various nursery pursuits, the small children playing, the big children fighting, the adolescents flirting and courting, and the old chiefs, dignified and majestic, reincarnations of Dhoute, watching and keeping order.

They did not during the first few days come quite close to me, no doubt because they resented my intrusion into their private domain.

Then one morning some bold fellows, approaching cautiously and retiring hurriedly, snatched away some of the food. After that all became plain sailing; the

mantra had been whispered into my ear; I was admitted into the fraternity. Business thenceforward went on all round the boulder on which I sat like Mowgli among his brother wolves, and food was taken from my hands as a matter of course. To this there was only one exception: the mothers who carried babies did not come near me, and although I must admit that this chagrined me, I fully appreciated the motives of their caution.

There was in the tribe a young but nearly full-grown lady who, so I am bound to suppose, must have been a very Helena of beauty from a cynocephalic point of view. She stood rather high, was *élancée*, clean-limbed, and the expression of her long face reminded me of that of many humans whom I have known, and also of some dachshunds and fox terriers of my past acquaintance. To her a young male, slightly larger than she was and a little heavier in bulk, paid marked attention. He was obviously very fond of her and she of him, but their courtship was objected to and in the most energetic manner interfered with by one of the old chiefs, by far the largest and fiercest-looking of the whole lot. Whenever he discovered that those two were together he charged them instantly and separated them, hustling away, to an accompaniment of fearful growls, the swain who, poor fellow, was not physically strong enough or else had not the moral courage to oppose adequate resistance to these onslaughts.

I imagined at the start that here was a case of jealousy between rival claimants for the favor of the same lady; but the fact that the old leader only

rarely joined the young lady's company when she was alone, and the comparative tameness of the scuffles, which showed little of the savage and bloody character which fights between amorous rivals usually assume, and to me looked rather like the authoritative interference of one entitled to command, gradually led me to believe that the relations between the large baboon and the young damsel were those of guardian and ward, or perhaps of father and daughter, and not those between suitor and well-beloved, and that the former's objection to the younger fellow's suit was not so much the result of jealousy as a matter of policy. Very possibly the young gentleman was not considered to be a desirable *parti* for mademoiselle; perhaps she was of better birth; she certainly looked better-bred than her inamorato, and I fancied I noticed something in her manner that reminded me of a princess.

This state of affairs continued for about a fortnight without any appreciable change. It was evident that the chief had quite made up his mind on the subject and that he had no intention whatever to relent; and the young people continued with equal pertinacity to avail themselves of every opportunity offered by temporary relaxation of his vigilance in their regard — his paramount job consisted in sentry work for the benefit of the whole tribe — in order to rush together and to start fondling and caressing each other, oblivious of all other considerations. But their innocent entertainments were never allowed to last for any length of time and always came to the same abrupt end just described; and I was asking



A YOUNG BABOON



AN OLD BABOON

myself who among the three would give in first, for the game was not one which, *à la longue*, could afford satisfaction to anybody. It is evident from what followed that two at least of the actors in the drama came to the same conclusion.

One morning, after I had gone to the arena as usual with my provisions, I noticed, when those morons arrived, that the central figures of my romance were missing, but the old chief was present and, according to his custom, watched over the safety of his subjects from the top of a stunted tree, whence he scanned the horizon for the approach of some potential enemy. He looked unconcerned and not in the least like one who had just committed a crime or a Draconic act of high justice — a fact which somewhat lessened the apprehension I felt on account of the absence of the lovers.

This apprehension disappeared entirely and gave way to a feeling of unalloyed satisfaction, when I started for my camp a little later during the forenoon.

I had not walked more than a hundred yards from the circus when I noticed, seated on the top of a great rock distant about a quarter of a mile, and visible in every direction, two figures in close embrace, whom, as I came nearer, I recognized as my two friends. My path passed quite close to the rock on which they sat, and I was thus able to ascertain, to my greatest pleasure, how happy and affectionate they looked. She had her arm round his neck and he his round her waist, and they both followed me with their eyes as I passed. I do not like to be taxed with inaccuracy, and I therefore hasten to add that I am not prepared

to swear that the fiancé winked at me when our eyes met. As they were perfectly visible to the rest of the tribe and to the chief himself, it was obvious that they were not in fear of pursuit; but whether they had been ostracised or whether they had decided to elope and live a life apart I have not been able to find out.

I remained in that same neighborhood for another couple of months, and during all that time I met them constantly. They neither left the country altogether, nor returned into the fold of their tribe. They have since, perhaps, founded a new dynasty.

At one time I felt very anxious for the fate of my friends the baboons. A prospector who was looking for mica appeared in the neighborhood. That he was a man of resource he proved on his arrival — dusty, and no doubt hungry as well as tired — by shooting down from a tree with his rifle the honey barrels of the natives.

We met, and one day I took him with me to my rendezvous with the apes. The first thing he said was: "There ought to be money in this; those baboons would fetch a price at the Coast." Being well acquainted with the remarkable versatility of the "tramp royal," who no more hesitates to change from a prospector to-day to a dealer in wild animals to-morrow than he would hesitate to change his shirt, I was seriously alarmed as long as he stayed in those parts. But fortunately he ran short of money and had to leave the country, and when I heard about him again he had arrived on the Congo.

Most animals are given to forming passionate

friendships, distinct from *la grande passion*, with individuals belonging either to their own or to another race or sex. They are capable of bringing into the affection for their partners as much loyalty and disinterestedness as any of Mr. Rex Beach's desperadoes. Many instances have been recorded by various writers; not a few of them refer to the affection which caged or maimed wild animals entertained for creatures with whom under ordinary circumstances they would have lived in a state of war: a kind of friendship which partakes of the character of De Latude's love for a rat or Pellisson's for a spider. One of the most pathetic of these is the well-authenticated friendship between a vulture and a chicken, which A. E. Brehm has narrated at length in his *Animals of the World*. That vulture, who had a crippled wing, died, after he had reached nearly twice the Psalmist's age, in the grounds of Count Lamberg's castle in Steyr in Upper Austria. Toward the end of his life — he was killed by an infuriated bull or cow — he lived in close intimacy with a chicken, from which he was inseparable, and which he used to keep close to his body, covering it with his sound wing when they were not moving about.

Needless to say these passionate friendships are as frequent among domesticated or captive apes and monkeys as among other animals, human or otherwise. One instance I remember which, through either overzealous anxiety or selfish jealousy, came to a deplorable end.

We were then staying, a friend of mine and myself, in the Mweli hills in the Sayidie province of

British East Africa; at that time, notwithstanding their proximity to Mombasa, these hills were still untouched by civilization.

We had in our camp a small grivet-monkey with a black face framed in white; the Swahili name of the beautiful creatures is "Tumbili," and so accordingly, we had called our pet. Although it had not yet attained to one third of the adult's size, it had already left babyhood far behind, and was as active and mischievous as it was tame. It was of course quite free to come and go as it liked.

The reputation of being mischievous, which grivet monkeys enjoy, is not entirely justified. Most people are ignorant of the fact that nearly all the grivet monkeys which are kept in captivity are far from full-grown, that what appears as mischievousness is merely exuberance of spirit and playfulness, and that their destructiveness comes under the same category as the destructiveness of puppies. I have known cases when grivets which had taken to stealing eggs or killing young pigeons or chickens, were at once ruthlessly shot by their master; yet if, instead of executing capital punishment, the latter had given them a sound thrashing with a switch, he would have attained the same object without incurring the omen of an action which Leonardo da Vinci estimated as being tantamount to homicide.

Grivet monkeys are quite as amenable to reason as dogs are and, when once they attain years of wisdom, they give up their escapades, just as fox terriers, when they grow to maturity, cease running after chickens and eating boots.

I have had in my possession an old female grivet monkey who, as she was free to run about everywhere in the house, was most careful not to break or upset anything, and moved on a table covered with things as daintily as a cat!

A. E. Brehm, mentioned above, was an enthusiastic admirer of the grivet, and took one with him when he returned to Germany from the Sudan. This monkey, whose name was Hassan, was once caught by Mrs. Brehm, the naturalist's mother, in the act of stealing eggs, and the old lady whipped him severely. On the following day Hassan came toward her, cautiously carrying an intact egg in his hand, deposited it at her feet, and retired, gurgling with satisfaction. That same Hassan had, at the beginning of his sojourn in Germany, acquired the habit of carrying his milk mug up a tree, and of throwing it to the ground after he had emptied it, thus smashing it to pieces. Again he was punished and, although he continued to take his milk up the tree, he ever afterward carried back the mug most carefully into the house after he had swallowed its contents.

These monkeys become most affectionate to their European masters, and it probably never happens that one of them, after living for some time in a settlement, rejoins a tribe of absolutely wild monkeys, although it may remain in the immediate vicinity in a half-domesticated state, either alone or in the company of others similarly situated. These latter are the ones which sometimes make themselves obnoxious in European houses, because they are bold enough to rob, and too cunning to let themselves be caught.

Whether the fact that they remain in or near the settlements is owing to their affection for the human race or, as others pretend, because monkeys refuse to receive into their tribe any individual that has spent some time among men, it would be difficult to say. But there can be no doubt that their craving for the society of human beings, when they have been once accustomed to it, may grow into a veritable passion.

I have known at least one case in which it culminated in an act of heroism of which few, if any, human beings would be capable. This was in Yontoi, in Jubaland, where a grivet monkey belonging to an officer in the King's African Rifles, which had, for some reason or other, been left behind on the northern side of the river, swam across it to the camp on the other side, although it must have known that the Juba teems with crocodiles.

Our little tumbili of Mweli was a delightful and affectionate young fellow, and we both became very fond of him. And then, one morning, the tide in the affairs of men and monkeys carried into our camp another tumbili, a complete baby this time, which had to be fed on milk from a bottle.

Pleased as we ourselves were to get it, our pleasure was as nothing compared to that of the older monkey. He pressed it to his heart, carried it about in his arms, and gave it up only with the greatest reluctance when it had to be fed. Whether he feared that we might harm it, or whether he was jealous of us or of the baby, I do not know, but the fact remains that he evinced the greatest objection to parting with it,

even for a few minutes only. We did not, at first, ascribe any importance to these transports, as we never doubted that, once he should get accustomed to the baby's presence, his manifestations of affection would assume a more normal and less violent form. But we were unfortunately completely mistaken, and what happened was exactly the reverse of what we had expected. As the days went on, the love of the tumbili for his adopted child and his impatience of all interference with it on our part increased in strength instead of abating, so that finally we had to resort to ruse in order to get hold of the baby to feed it.

So it came about that, before we had fully realized it, the situation had developed into one of acute hostility between ourselves and our erstwhile pal, the tumbili, who now looked upon us, his beautiful eyes blazing hatred as upon his greatest enemies, maliciously intent on depriving him of his most cherished treasure. It became increasingly difficult to feed the baby, as its self-imposed protector kept further and further away out of reach and even when he was feeding himself did not allow it to move in our direction, being quite ready to drop his own food and to seize it at the first sign of danger. Gradually the duration of his absences from the camp became longer and longer, and he took his precious burden with him to the top of the highest trees. Finally he left it behind him altogether when he came for one of his now rare visits to the camp, having hidden it safely far out of sight in the dense foliage. Fearful lest the poor little mite should be starved to death, we did

all we could to make the kidnapper relinquish his prey, but we had delayed too long. He was now on his guard, and none of our former stratagems were of any avail. At last one day the baby was found dead at the foot of a tree; it had died of hunger, as was determined by my companion, who examined the stomach. Tumbili continued to live in our neighborhood for some time, but never ventured within reach, which circumstance points, one must admit, to a highly developed conscience; then, in the end, he disappeared for good.

It is curious to note how the very people who are in the habit of looking upon all animals as brutes devoid of reason sometimes expect from these same creatures feelings so high and lofty that, were they to expect them from the average human being, they would be justly looked upon as arrant fools. Once before the war I was camped, in German East Africa, for twenty-four hours near the camp of a road-surveyor. We met, and talked about animals, of which he professed to be fond, and incidentally he mentioned that he had arrived at the place with two young grivet monkeys, carried in a cage. "But," he added, "yesterday they managed to escape and to run up that tree, and nothing would induce them to come back."

"And so they got away?" I asked.

"Got away?" he shouted, his anger rising at the recollection; "I shot them both, the ungrateful brutes!"

X

WARRIOR ANTS AND WHITE ANTS

It occasionally happens, in the hot parts of Africa, that one's attention is attracted by the following occurrence. One may be sitting, say, in front of one's tent, or on the verandah of one's house, when one suddenly notices a quantity of the ordinary, harmless brown ants, which are to be met with everywhere, approaching in disorderly, headlong flight, many of them clutching their pupæ to their thoraces, like babies, just as the women of German villages, in the Thirty Years' War, might have clutched their babies to their breasts when they fled from their homes at the sounding of the dreaded cry of alarm: "The Swedes are coming!"

One would imagine that a superior human being, unless he happened to be an entomologist, would bestow but momentary attention on the distressed insects, and, after a passing glance, return to his occupation. Not so, however, the experienced old African. He will rise, in greater or lesser haste, according to his temperament, call his servants, and say to them: "'Siafu' are approaching. Look about everywhere! Stop them if you can!"

The servants need not be told twice, however easy they may take life as a rule: they will start running, and search the surroundings of the tent or house in extending circles, until one of them will sing out:

“There they are!” and as likely as not these words will be accompanied on the spot by jumps into the air, kicks, and clappings of the palm of the hands on the naked feet and calves — a behavior which, to the uninitiated, would appear unaccountable as well as ridiculous. He has met the *avant-garde* of the enemy!

Siafu is the Swahili name for the smaller of the two common kinds of warrior ants. The larger of the two, conspicuous by its odious smell during the rainy season, although a sharp biter, is a *quantité négligeable* compared with its smaller cousin, whose ferocity, determination, and pluck are unimaginable. Their bite is very painful — that of the soldiers, with their disproportionately large heads and mandibles, particularly so; and so bloodthirsty are they, that, rather than let go, they will suffer their bodies to be severed from their heads. The bite, however, is fortunately nonpoisonous, and leaves no ill after-effects when the assailant has been torn off; but this does not prevent the siafu from being a very real danger to living beings. Caged birds and mammals are killed, if not rescued in time. I remember a case in which they killed, during the night, a caged wildcat! I have known them to kill pigs in their sties, by crawling into their brains through the snout. It has happened that babies, who had been temporarily deposited on the ground by their mothers and left alone, have become their victims. The little brother of a servant of mine, in the Tahita mountains of British East Africa, was killed in this way. This sort of death, as is generally known, was a capital punishment for certain crimes, in use with many native races.

Although the European ant, as regards ferocity, cannot be compared with the African warrior ant, it, too, was used occasionally, and not so long ago either, as an instrument of torture. During the Polish insurrection in 1863-64, the insurgents killed prisoners by hanging them from trees, head downward, into ant heaps; and the same horrible torture was, until not many years ago, a favorite way of retaliation used in Slavonic countries by poachers against obnoxious gamekeepers.

The rapidity with which siafu spread over the body of animate beings, whether man or beast, is amazing. Old residents in Zanzibar will remember the sensation that was created when the wife of a foreign consul, walking with her husband on the "Mnasi mmoja," — the "Rotten Row" of the African Ceylon, — having inadvertently stepped into a procession of warrior ants, was so rapidly infested by the enemy that, wild with pain and disgust, she tore off her outer dressing until she stood there, *coram publico*, in night attire. It was, fortunately for the poor lady, not the fashionable walking-hour.

People are apt to lose their heads completely under these circumstances, the moral effect being at least as strong as the physical one. A friend of mine, who lived near Lake Victoria, once told me how a guest of his, who was sleeping in the same room, near the window, was attacked by siafu in the middle of the night, and already covered with them when he awoke. He jumped out of bed, tore off his pyjamas, and started dancing about, yelling for his boys to come and pick

off the insects. But when they arrived running, he, instead of standing still, began boxing their ears, whereupon they, believing that their master had gone mad, ran out of the house again, terrorized, leaving him to shift for himself. My friend, heartless fellow, told me that he nearly died with laughter, as everybody else would have done in his place, I suppose.

It was in Zanzibar that the writer's own first acquaintance with siafu was made. He was walking in the country with a friend, an old resident, when the latter suddenly called out: "Ants! Ants!"

"Do they bite?" the writer naïvely asked.

"You will soon know!" was the reply. And, indeed, a few minutes later, he had gained experience for a lifetime.

H. G. Wells has foreshadowed a sinister possibility — the evolution of the African ant to tiger-size! Imagine the path across the continent of an army of a million tigers, so fierce that, rather than release the cow they have seized, they will allow their heads to be cut off!

Siafu are worst just before the rainy season, when, in dry, hot weather, they go in search of water, and during the rainy season, when their underground dwellings become flooded. They do not walk during a heavy downpour; but their appearance is generally the presage of rain.

There are several ways of preventing siafu from entering a house in the daytime, when timely notice of their approach has been gained. That most commonly used, and of slowest effect, is the strewing of ashes in their path and the beating on the head of the

column with firebrands. So great is the siafu's pluck and determination, that the rear keeps moving on and on while the head is being destroyed — advancing over the bodies of the slain; and it is not until the ranks of the column are entirely disorganized that the separate individuals will alter their course.

But, fortunately for mankind, if those invincible warriors fear not death, they have their idiosyncrasies in point of smell, like Henry of Navarre, who fainted at sight of a rose. One of these aversions is known to all native tribes from the Juba to the Limpopo; they cannot stand the smell of a smouldering rag, but it must be the rag of a garment which has been long worn by man. This remedy is fairly effective: the rags are twisted into a kind of rope, and pieces of it are deposited, with due regard to the prevailing wind, either in such places as the column, on its way to the dwelling-place, is likely to pass, or all round the latter. They are then lighted. Sometimes, when these rags have been deposited round about the house or tent, a native, running with a stick which he presses firmly down, connects the different pieces by a line marked on the ground. The object of this does not seem quite clear, but some natives consider it to be an essential part of the defense.

It is amusing to recollect, in this connection, that the late Maurus Jókai, the great Hungarian novelist, states in one of his books, that a sure means to make a herd of cattle stampede is to smoke, to windward of it, a pipe into which the "sediment" of an old hat has previously been scraped!

The natives of the Livingstone Range use the bulb

of a plant which they call "kirago": they chew it, and then spit in front and on the head of the advancing enemy. This remedy is very effective. The natives who use kirago also say that warrior ants will not pass where kirago has been planted; but I have never had occasion to test the truth of this assertion.

All these measures make it comparatively easy to avoid being rushed by an army of siafu during the day; but the question assumes a much more serious aspect when the fiend, having avoided detection during the daytime, succeeds in penetrating into the habitation or the stables at night, either by entering through such apertures as offer or by burrowing. Natives, when their huts have been thus invaded at night, simply bolt, and spend the night elsewhere. But Europeans, unless they happen to live in houses with several rooms, have, as a rule, nowhere else to go, and have therefore no other choice but to help their servants fight the invader, or else go for a night walk of several hours' duration — an alternative which, in the rainy season and on moonless nights, is anything but a pleasure.

To get rid of siafu in a house, whether of mud and wattle or of brick, is a complicated affair, unless you happen to live in a country where kirago grows, and where the natives are familiar with its use. In a house with a thatched roof one has to be exceedingly careful when handling firebrands or ashes; besides, in the nature of things, unless they happen to strike an open door or window, these predatory pests penetrate into a house only in dribblets; and, in proportion as you destroy those that appear, others take their place. I

have emptied a 300 centigramme bottle of sulphuric acid, practically without effect, on the head of an army of siafu, which was entering through interstices in a mud wall.

It is sometimes a good plan, in a tent, to remove from the path of the ants all things that might attract them and stop their march; they then may simply march through. When they come up, as also happens, through the chinks between the bricks of a badly cemented brick floor, the difficulty increases, as the only way to reach them is through those very chinks — a narrow channel; they then keep making unexpected visits at all hours of the day and night. In a case like that, Cooper's or MacDougal's Sheep Dip and Jeyes's Fluid are the only remedies, provided they are used unsparingly. The same applies to those occasions when ants have dug up from underneath, in stables.

It also happens occasionally that either part or the whole of the invading army climbs the wall of a house and settles in the thatched roof for a time, the duration of which depends on the amount of prey that they find there. Nothing can be done in such a case but to wait patiently until they leave, and destroy, in the meantime, the small detachments which climb down the walls inside. I remember one time, when this happened to me. I had a cat, with three kittens, living on the roof, to reach which she had to climb a tree and then jump across. She carried her children down, one after the other and saved them all; but I had to pick out siafu afterward from the skins of the lot, including the brave mother cat herself.

All the remedies above mentioned, however, are only makeshifts without permanent effect, as the ants will always return, from time to time, to a place once visited. There is only one radical way to avoid this, and that is to find out, by following their path, where their nest is and destroy it. This establishment lies, as a rule, a few feet below ground, among the roots of trees. It is necessary first, to uncover as far as possible this dreadful sink of iniquity, — one dark, seething mass of the most bloodthirsty creatures in creation, — which looks like a single huge, glossy, twitching and shivering monster coiled up. Then, where this is practicable, quantities of boiling water are poured upon it; where it is unpracticable, owing to the distance from house and water, heaps of dry wood are piled into the openings and then set on fire. A great many are killed, and as many, perhaps, escape; but the nest is invariably deserted within a few days; and, if it was the only one in the neighborhood, one may be safe from similar visitations for years to come.

White ants, as everybody knows, are not really ants, chiefly because, owing to the beautiful long wings of their females and males, they have been classed in the order of *Neuroptera*, to which ants do not belong. Nevertheless, they are very hymenopterid in their habits and in the constitution of their monarchies, and their appellation, “ants,” is certainly not a case of *lucus a non lucendo*.

As objectionable pests and sources of annoyance, they run their warrior cousins very close, although bloodthirstiness does not form part of their character. They stand, in relation to the warrior ants, as a gang

of thieves working in the silence and darkness of the night would stand in relation to a band of highway robbers and murderers. All the same, their workers, when your skin happens to come into contact with them, inflict severe pain; but it appears to be a secretion rather than a bite, as they do not get hold with their mandibles; also, the pain is instantaneous, like the burning of a very virulent nettle, and spreads over the whole area of the contact. All animals carefully avoid treading among white-ant workers. Unlike the females and males, which, when they have shed their silky mantle of wings, are merely ugly brown beetles, these workers, of two sizes, are extremely pretty insects, with amber heads and thoraces of pearl; imitated in these materials, they would make beautiful breastpins and hatpins.

These workers have a peculiar habit: although they avoid, as a rule, the light, and prefer moving and working in darkness, one frequently meets them during the rainy season in the forests, trekking along in single file. Sometimes two lines are marching parallel to one another, in opposite directions, at a distance of one to two inches; whenever two ants meet abreast, they stop, bow head and thorax deep to the ground, and then continue, each on his way.

But, however courteous the termites may be in their intercourse with their own kith and kin, the fact remains that, in their relations to mankind, they are incomparable destroyers of property; they are even an element distinctly inimical to culture, as well-to-do planters in the Tropics who could afford to adorn the walls of their countryseats with pictures of value are

deterred from doing so by the certainty that termites respect an original painting no more than a chromo, and that a single night is sufficient for the destruction of both.

When invading a house, termites always move underground and come up in the night like a jack-in-the-box. Sometimes, they emerge underneath a mat, which is soon hopelessly spoiled; sometimes underneath a box; and, unless one looks under the boxes every day, the contents, say, books, may be hopelessly destroyed below, while the top still looks intact. It is true that they give a warning signal, but it is of so weak a kind that, unless one lives in a tent or in a very small room, or unless they happen to make their final preparations just underneath one's bed, it must always be missed. This signal is a sound which closely resembles the noise that a basket of small seed would make if it were emptied on a hard polished floor: it is the danger-signal. If you hear it one night, you know that, in the course of the next night, the white ants will appear — never in the night during which the noise is first heard. This latter detail, confirmed by the writer's experience, is well known to natives; they say that the white ants, in the night of their arrival, first want to make sure if everything is all right, and that it is only when they are satisfied on this point that they emerge in the night that follows. To move along the walls and gain the rafters, they make ingenious covered ways. In these, however, personally, I have never met any but the smaller kind of workers, never the large ones, who would appear to move inside the walls, as they, too, undoubtedly reach the roofs of houses.

White ants yield easier than warrior ants: sheep-dips, Jeyes's Fluid, paraffin poured into the holes through which they come up, always chase them away temporarily, and their visits grow less and less frequent, unless by misfortune the house has been built just above their city. In the latter case, there is no help, and they will soon gain the roof, and slowly destroy the wooden parts. I have known of solid brick buildings, with corrugated iron roofs and cement floors, which had finally to be abandoned and pulled down because they had inadvertently been erected over a nest of termites.

Tolstoy has written, in *The Invaders*, this beautiful sentence: "All evil feelings in the heart of men ought, it would seem, to vanish away in this intercourse with nature — with this immediate expression of beauty and goodness."

One may be allowed to doubt whether the great philosopher, if destiny had taken him to tropical Africa, would not have caused to be erased from future editions of his book the last two words of the sonorous phrase. For nothing in the world conveys more forcibly to one's understanding Mother Nature's ruthless extravagance, and absolute disregard of the individual, than the annual nuptial flight of the termites. A scourge to African mankind as termites are, it is impossible for anyone but a native to ignore the pathos — the word is used deliberately — of these hymeneal festivities. As most people know, every year, at the beginning of the rainy season, the males and the females of the white ants emerge winged from their underground dwellings, generally during

the afternoon, and fly out into the mild light of the evening for a short flirtation and honeymoon, which does not last much longer than the day itself, followed by a return to the earth, the shedding of the wings, hastened by roundabout movements of the insects themselves, and, in due course, by the organization of new monarchies under the sway of the now pregnant queens, who soon develop into monstrous receptacles of eggs. One supposes that the occasion must be one of rejoicing for the two sexes, which crawl out of their tunnel, trailing their long silky wings behind them, accompanied and surrounded by a highly excited crowd of amber-headed workers. Others, however, rejoice in an equal degree, and these are the legions which prey on them!

There does not appear to be a single creature indigenous to Africa, from the Negro downward, which does not appreciate the winged termite as a delicacy. Natives catch them in cunningly devised traps, devour them alive, devour them dead, raw or fried or roasted, or dried in the sun, or pounded to a paste. They pack them in bags like beans, alive or dead, and sell them on the market. It is a surprising fact, not only that termites which have been tightly packed in a canvas bag for a whole night are still alive in the morning, but that those among them which have not shed their wings are still able to fly; it shows what a wonderfully elastic texture those wings are made of.

Besides natives, monkeys, apes, dogs, cats, mongooses, and lizards, all kinds of ants feed on termites voraciously, although they leave the workers re-

ligiously alone. Even the large black warrior ant, which carries away the males and females without difficulty, when it inadvertently finds itself face to face with a worker, immediately turns tail — a behavior which gives support to the opinion that the latter's defense lies in a secretion rather than in its mandibles.

And the birds! It is amazing how the news spreads among them, that a flight of termites is taking place at such and such a locality, often completely hidden by trees!

Yet they all get the news, and birds turn up, of the existence of which in the district one had no idea — rare and strange species, like those equivocal human apparitions which emerge, nobody knows whence, in large cities, at times of stirring events. On these occasions, the birds which would appear to form a sort of truce among themselves, for I have frequently noticed birds of prey in the assembly — sit down on the trees surrounding the termites' heap, and, whenever one or more insects rise on the wing, a sharp competition for the capture ensues. It all looks just like a game, in which the participants are so keen, that they even lay aside, to some extent, the fear of man — of the white man.

I have never seen any written computation of the probable proportion between slain and survivors; but the percentage of the latter must be infinitesimal. Naturalists call this "the keeping up of the balance of life."

XI

THE BAMBESI

“A PROLONGED residence in any part of Africa produces in one’s mind a sweeping hatred of the insect race, a hatred not unmixed with apprehension, a dread lest by some unforeseen turn in the world’s affairs the existing checks might fail to keep those creatures under and that some awful development of insects might threaten man’s very existence by direct or indirect attack — warfare with his body or the attempted destruction of his food supplies.”

It is probable that the majority of people both in Europe and in Africa, on reading the above passage in Sir Harry Johnston’s eloquent and passionate diatribe against the insect world, would see in it only a rhetorical artifice designed to give more force to the general argument. Very few would consider the realization of the development foreshadowed in it as lying within the range of practical possibilities. For my own part, although fully alive to the horrors graphically described by the author of *British Central Africa*, I would, until quite recently, even after a stay on the Dark Continent of half a lifetime, have dismissed contemptuously the idea that insects — putting aside, of course, the carriers of fatal diseases — could interfere in a man’s existence to any greater extent than that of making themselves extremely

disagreeable. That this interference could actually assume the importance of a *force majeure*, resulting in his complete defeat and the consequent change of all of his plans, I had yet to learn.

When I arrived, in 1921, in the boma of Chikala, I was surprised at the large number of ants running about in the neighborhood of the house, the immediate surroundings of which had been stripped of grass and showed the granite sands, densely riddled with holes the size of .450 bullets. At first I did not pay much attention to the insects. The only ants which I feared were the two chief kinds of warrior ants and the white ants, creatures with which I had had elsewhere many a sharp encounter, followed invariably by their defeat. The ants I met with in the Chikala hills were well known to me. Their native name in Nyasaland is "bambesi." They occur all over Central Africa, generally in patches and, as a rule, in small numbers. I had never stayed anywhere where they existed in sufficiently large numbers to become a nuisance, although years before people in Songea, in what is now Tanganyika Territory, had complained to me about them when I passed through. They are pretty little creatures as ants go, with a reddish-brown thorax and a spherical body the size of a small pea, which looks like a black pearl.

Strange to say, they do not "bite" human beings and may crawl singly over one's bare legs or hands without attracting attention; but when scared or interfered with in any way they eject a reddish liquid which stains cloth and, for the duration of a few seconds, inflicts a sharp burning sensation, followed

in due course by the peeling of the skin of the part touched.

My first intimation that something was wrong came from the behavior of my chickens. I had imagined that they would cram themselves with bambesi ants, thus allowing me to economize in maize. Instead of this, to my surprise and chagrin, they took to the lower branches of the trees — as chickens as a rule only do at night — and stayed there all day, coming down only for a hurried meal of grain; but I never saw them swallow a single ant. Soon afterwards I sent all away to board in a native village beyond the bambesi reserve.

When I asked some natives who came up to the house — there being no native village on the mountain — whether the ants would disappear when the rains came on, I received the cheerful reply: "Oh, no! There are plenty more then!" "And in the night?" I asked. "Do they not go to sleep at night?"

"Oh, no!" was again the reply. "They run about all night!"

Being interested in minerals, I began, as soon as I had settled down, to explore the mountain where the old boma stood, and it did not take me long to realize that the whole of it, or rather all that part of it which faced south, was a single, colossal ant-heap. All the footpaths were riddled with holes, as were the surroundings of the house. Ants swarmed among the granite boulders, the only places where they were not in constant evidence being those which were densely covered with a litter of grass or leaves. On the footpaths they ran about in such masses that it was

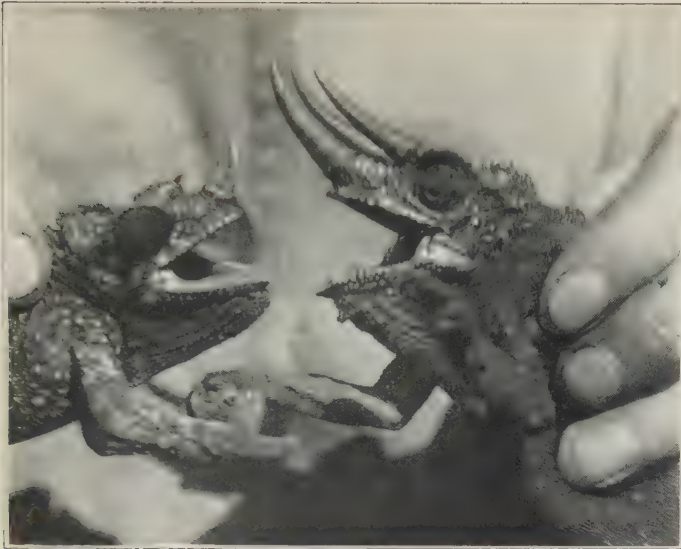
impossible for man or beast to stand still even for a few seconds without being immediately covered by them. In a northern direction their reserve extended to the top of the mountain; in the south it included the road which skirted the base. Westward I traced them for a couple of miles. In the east they did not occur at the time of my arrival beyond a perennial stream which descended from the top of the mountain, running from north to south and passing at a distance of about five hundred yards from the house.

Another five hundred yards away, at the other side of the water, there was stationed at that time a small outpost of police askaris, the only inhabitants of the mountain beside myself and my household. Their settlement was quite free of ants, their chickens ran about happy and unmolested, rats preyed upon their provisions, and they told me at once that the bambesi ants did not cross that particular stream. This last statement, however, subsequently turned out to have been premature. Early in the spring of 1922 the ants gradually began to invade the country on the eastern side of the stream; the characteristic bullet-holes began to appear on the footpaths in ever-increasing numbers. At first we all thought that the few ants which were running about on the other side had been carried there by the feet of people passing, but they became more and more numerous. When I left in April they covered the ground up to two hundred yards across the water. In August last I was told by the corporal of the askaris, whom I met in Zomba, that the vanguard of the enemy had at last reached their camp. As I had been told by the askaris that

the bambesi had not been in evidence on the site of the old boma until the spring before my arrival there, I have come to the conclusion that the whole sheet of ants, which must measure three square miles at least, is slowly progressing in a direction opposite to that of the sun.

No one who has not been on the spot can form an adequate idea of the numbers in which these terrible insects cover the vast area of their reserve. Native women, when obliged to pass within its confines in search of brushwood, carry switches to whip them off their legs. After the first few days my two fox terriers absolutely refused to leave the house unless they saw me preparing for a long walk, and when outside they kept rushing from one point of vantage to another as men swim from boulder to boulder in crossing a rapid, never daring to follow the paths or the broad road which, years before, had been built from the plain to the boma. All the boys whom I had brought with me gave notice, one after the other, and I had to replace them by natives from Mposa's village at the foot of the range.

During my stay on the mountain I made friends with a couple of grown-up ravens, who regularly came to me for food. This, until they were tame enough to come on to the verandah of the house, proved to be quite a complicated affair. Any food thrown on the bare ground outside was so rapidly covered with bambesi that the birds, which from the first showed the greatest aversion to the insects, refused to eat it. The only way was to make the bits so small that they could gulp them down before they were seized;



Courtesy of Carl E. Akeley and American Museum of Natural History

SOME AFRICAN LIZARDS



Courtesy of Carl E. Akeley and American Museum of Natural History

SECTION OF AN ANT HILL

and all the time they were feeding they kept hopping from one leg to the other, like the tenderfoots of Washoe, who, when they had declined the drink offered by an old pioneer, had to jump while their feet were being peppered-at with a six-shooter. Conditions became a little easier when the ravens gained confidence enough to take their meals on the verandah, although even then the food had to be served on a plate, for if a piece of meat or fish were dropped on the floor the ants would arrive from all sides and climb up to it within a few minutes.

The chief attraction to the ants seemed to be small mammals and their young. Not a single rat or mouse was to be found in or near the house, while beyond the boundaries of the bambesi reserve, in the askaris' quarters and in the native village at the foot of the hill, these rodents occurred in the usual legions.

There was a large colony of bats living in the roof, between the corrugated iron and the ceiling of cotton cloth, and on that colony the bambesi kept making raids with almost diabolical ingenuity and persistency. To effect these, they climbed the uprights of the verandah, or two high adjoining trees, the branches and twigs of which they followed on to the roof, letting themselves drop on to this last where there was no immediate connection. On such occasions the adult bats would, in the glaring midday sun, leave their loopholes and fly away into the open. The young ones, unless I succeeded in rescuing one or the other in time, were invariably killed.

It is a remarkable detail, that there appeared to be

organized hunting parties among the ants. It frequently happened that young bats, with wings not yet quite developed, attempted to escape during the raids, by climbing down the outer brick walls, where they were able to get a foothold. These were nearly always met at the bottom by parties which were obviously expecting them! I also believe that either the bite or the liquid ejected by the insects must be poisonous, at least to young mammals, because bats which I rescued with only two or three ants on no vital part of their body rarely recovered. It was on these occasions a not altogether pleasant surprise to realize what sensitive animals bats are. The little creatures shook like leaves and their hearts hammered as if they would burst. The fact that toward the end of my stay the number of bats in the roof had dwindled into insignificance seemed to me a conclusive confirmation of the assertion of the natives that the advent of the bambesi in those parts was of comparatively recent date.

Things went from bad to worse. Some young mongooses were brought to me, and from that time my fight with the bambesi developed into a nightmare. I had to stick up with pasteboard and cotton-wool and gum all the chinks of the bow-windows leading on to the verandah from my bedroom and sitting-room, while the mongooses themselves, when not running about in the rooms, were kept in a cage on a table, the legs of which were standing in vessels filled with a solution of Jeyes's Fluid. Even so, the enemy was constantly breaking through somewhere, or emerging from places where the cement floor or the walls

contiguous to it were defective. As long as they were quite small my pets had several narrow escapes. As they grew up and became more active the danger was lessened, but to let them run about free outside the house was out of the question.

My fight against this ghastly nuisance lasted for seven months and then I threw up the sponge and left. The enormous numbers of the ants were against me, as they made simultaneous action against them impossible; I could inflict only partial defeats, the effects of which were of short duration. In order to be successful I should have had to use as many tons of the various stuffs which I employed against them as I used gallons. I should have had a better chance if I had been able to locate the nests with the pupæ, but as the bambesi build no "heaps" except temporary ones of small size below and around organic matter which they intend to drag below ground, I should have had to dig up the whole country in order to find the nurseries. I tried for a couple of days, but succeeded in uncovering only two.

I used in succession, and with the same disheartening results, boiling water, paraffin — which is the great remedy against the mites — a pitch-black decoction of native tobacco, nearly pure Sanitas and Jeyes's Fluid, formic acid in powder and dissolved. Jeyes's Fluid, when almost undiluted, killed them, but where was I to get it in sufficient quantities to keep five or six acres of ground soaked with it for a day? I kept sending boys on to the roof with buckets filled with the stuff, and these were emptied on the trails which the ants had to follow when they wanted

to get inside. The effect, however, never lasted longer than one or two days at the most.

I made a strong solution of corrosive sublimate, and, with the help of my servants, spent the greatest part of a day pouring it into the holes all round the house by means of a funnel. This had no effect whatsoever. The ants welled out of the holes like water, but none died, neither did they run away. The injection of buckets of a strong solution of vitriol — two pounds to the gallon — led to the same result. So little were they affected by this that they actually collected on the residue of the sulphate which fell out when the buckets were emptied.

At last I encroached on my small provision of cyanide of potassium, although I could ill afford to spare it. In this also I was doomed to disappointment.

To begin with, I put a large fish from Lake Chirua, already far gone, — one of their favorite delicacies, — on the ground, and powdered it with the poison. A few of the insects succumbed to temptation, and died on the spot. From that moment all the other ants gave the fish a wide berth, and I had to bury the bait in order to prevent my dogs, or my ravens, or even the kitchen boy from getting at it, the last-named having, a week before, picked up and eaten a similar piece of fish, happily “unsalted,” which I had deposited in the bush because I wanted to find out if the smell would by any chance decoy the bambesi away from the house.

After the failure of this attempt to poison the enemy with powdered cyanide, I proceeded to use it as I had used the vitriol, and poured into the ant-holes

all round the house, by means of the glass funnel, a solution strong enough to dispatch into a better world an army of human beings. At first I rashly concluded that I had at last met the reward for my perseverance, for, from many of the holes torrents of bambesi came pouring out, *carrying their dead*.

These funeral corteges behaved in a remarkable manner; some of them carried their slain to a considerable distance, even into the bush, there dropped them, and then returned. Others simply brought the victims up out of one hole, and then carried them underground again through the next nearest one! My boys were positive that the bodies which were carried to a distance and dropped were those in which life was extinct, while those which were taken back below ground were those expected to recover!

For several consecutive days I poured the cyanide of potassium solution into the holes around the house in the hope that the bambesi might at last leave so dangerous a neighborhood. Every morning I rose expecting to hear that the enemy had raised the siege in the course of the night, and every morning I found them moving about in undiminished numbers.

While the war was waging I made it known to all the natives in the neighborhood that I would pay a pound sterling to anyone who brought me an efficient weapon against the bambesi, either *in natura*, or by information. I was convinced, and still am, that natives exist somewhere in the country who do know how to get rid of the plague; and so, when a man said to come from "far away" was brought to me, and assured me that thick brine poured into the ant-holes

would cause the enemy to decamp, I immediately acted on his advice. The result was absolutely nil. Then another man came and said that zebra hide, cut into strips and boiled for hours, and the decoction poured into the holes, was an infallible remedy. He swore that he was telling the truth and nothing but the truth, and I sent a man out to try and get a piece of zebra hide, which was not an easy thing to do, first, because there were no zebras in the immediate neighborhood; and second, because natives, suspicious as they are, would naturally jump to the conclusion that the request was merely a trap to find out those in illicit possession of firearms. After the lapse of a week I got a piece as large as a handkerchief, but I suppose that it was too small to be any good, for after it had been boiled for nearly a day the soup had no effect at all.

My state of mind now was such that I think I would have accepted the help of Mephistopheles if he had offered it, and when an old Negro, reputed to be a witch-doctor, came up and said that he had a charm by which he would force the bambesi, all the bambesi around the house, to leave once and for all, I accepted his offer.

The wizard began by borrowing a few pence, with which he bought several heads of millet; these he sprinkled with a powder, which he had about his person, muttering incantations, and when this was done he disposed of them on the ground in different places, over the orifices wherefrom the greatest number of ants were in the habit of issuing. Then he stood up and gave voice to a sort of chant, pointing

and waving in the direction of the mountain-top. Then he turned to me and said: "To-morrow morning, when you get up, you will find that all the bambesi have gone away during the night in the direction I have ordered them to go. I will come back here during the forenoon." Then he left.

On the following morning, when the boy came into my bedroom, I told him, as I did every day, to go and see if there was any fresh development among the enemy. He returned almost at once and said: "Sir, they are climbing the wall of the house!" I rushed out and saw that he was telling the truth. There was certainly more commotion than usual in the ranks of the bambesi, but instead of moving away from the house in the direction which the mchawi had pointed out to them, they were moving toward it, and the wall was already covered with them from the ground to the roof. I sent some of the boys on the roof with buckets of Jeyes's Fluid solution, while others had to sweep the wall from below, and I sprinkled cyanide of potassium solution all along the foundation, until the coast was clear again for a short armistice. The wizard I never saw again.

It was then that I made up my mind to leave the Chikala range for good. Chiefly out of pity for the unfortunate bats that would be left at the mercy of their cruel foe, I employed the time till my departure in trying new devices to prevent the ants from getting into the roof. I cut off the branches of the trees which could be used as bridges, and I smeared the uprights of the verandah all round with glue. But this kept them away from the uprights only as long

as the glue was fresh, so that it had to be renewed constantly, and besides, they soon took to climbing up along the walls, as they had done after the witch-doctor's incantation. In this respect, too, they gave evidence of their intelligence and cunning, never starting to climb up from the same side twice following, and invariably choosing for their assaults those walls which were the least exposed to observation.

I have since heard, on excellent authority, that I might have been successful in my defense if I had used powdered instead of dissolved corrosive sublimate. My informant, himself an authority on insects, said that this poison, although it does not kill them, has the most extraordinary effect on ants — it drives them mad; they fight among themselves; and the survivors abandon the locality.

But I am not sure whether this remedy, however effective it may be over a limited space, would prove of lasting efficacy over an area as extended as the one in which I had my adventure, and no power on earth could induce me to go back to try.

XII

IN THE MYOMBO FOREST

GRASS and dew, objects of wistful longing in many inhabitants of dusty European cities, lose their attraction in tropical Africa. To most travelers from these latitudes, the initial words of Rubinstein's beautiful song would convey nothing but the memory of marshes below a cloudless sky, between walls of grass twelve feet high, where they found themselves, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, as soaking wet as if they had swum through the Zambesi; grass in which poisonous ticks lurked in ambuscade like wounded lions, ready, at a brushing past of a part of the traveler's attire, to pass on to it with inconceivable presence of mind; grass, the assegai-points of which were caught by the outside clothing and then worked their way, with the method of sentient beings, through shirt and underwear right to the skin!

After this Inferno the Myombo forest, with its scanty undergrowth and gorgeous flora, brings respite and relief, even if, according to preconceived ideas, it scarcely deserves the appellation of "forest." Distinct from the heavy-timbered, dense forests of the mountain ranges and the watercourses, it is really only an intensified "bush," in which the specific trees of the latter grow closer to one another and to a somewhat greater height than is usually the case in the African champaign.

Even compared with the forests of Europe, the Myombo forest cuts a rather poor figure. Its nearest approximation is perhaps a Hungarian or Schleswig-Holstein beech forest, although the trees of the Myombo forest would appear small and insignificant if they were transplanted into one of these.

Owing to the slight density of the foliage, the trees give comparatively little shade, and most of them are bare of branches till very near the top. They often fork into two, close to the ground.

Almost all the stems, no matter to what kind of tree they belong, have the same gray color. In *The Voyage of the Beagle* Darwin makes the observation that tree trunks in the tropical forests of Brazil are of a much lighter color than those in England, and he adds that this is due to the fact that the wood of the bark itself is of a lighter color. The gray coloring of the tree trunks of the Myombo forest is caused by a growth of moss or lichen which covers them. In addition to this almost microscopic covering, most of the trees wear, on the south side, long, floating, yellowish-green beards of lichen, as a protection against the prevailing cold winds.

All over the forest there occur at regular intervals, conical hills, varying in height from twenty-five feet to about fifty, and in diameter from a hundred feet to one hundred and fifty.

Nearly every one of these hills is topped by a single tree, which, by its greater size and its labyrinth of knotty branches, differs considerably from the trees that surround it on a lower level, while around it the slopes of the hill itself are overgrown by thick vegeta-

tion. Animal life in the forest centres on and around those hills. Those larger trees are perhaps the survivors of the original forest.

On sunny days, when the leaves glitter like mica and the ground is mottled by the quick alternation of light and shade, the Myombo forest has a gay and pleasant appearance, but it makes a melancholy impression under a clouded sky.

The Myombo, although it has given its name to the whole concern, is not of more frequent occurrence in it than other kinds of trees; but it has a way, like some otherwise insignificant people, of emphasizing its presence by the noise which it produces. During the whole of the dry season its large flat pods, which consist of two parts, are curled up by the dryness, and fly asunder with a loud click, sometimes while they are still on the branch, sometimes at the very moment of reaching the ground, in which latter case they jump into the air again, several feet high. This characteristic clicking goes on incessantly, day and night, as long as the dry season lasts, and one gets so accustomed to it that one misses it at first during the rains.

Economically, unless one should feel inclined to assign first rank in this respect to several varieties of trees with medicinal properties of questionable utility to the community, — although in great request by the native *jeunesse dorée* at a certain age, — the Uapaca tree, called “msuku” by the Negroes, is the most important. It occurs in large numbers, and the fruit, which resembles the medlar, constitutes, during the rainy season, a very considerable item of native

food. It is to be hoped that some day a commercial exploitation of this fruit, perhaps for the manufacture of alcohol, may be introduced. The benefit to the community would be inestimable, as it would arrest the deforestation, which is now progressing with inexorable regularity, to procure space for plantations.

During the rainy season the forest is full of beautiful flowers, in whose coloring scarlet-red and indigo-blue predominate. Their fragrance combines with the stronger aroma of the tree blossoms to fill the atmosphere with the peculiar, heavy, *chapelle ardente* perfume of tropical forests.

Compared with conditions on the high mountain-ranges of tropical Africa, butterflies and moths are not well represented in the Shire highlands, owing no doubt to the presence of enormous quantities of predatory insects, ants, ichneumon flies, and solitary hunting-wasps, which latter commandeer every available maggot, larva, and caterpillar, for their storage of paralytics.

As a compensation for the absence of variety in the butterflies, the variety and the number of dragon flies, which make their first appearance toward the end of the rainy season, is remarkable. It may be that their preponderance in number over the moths and butterflies is due to their aquatic antecedents, which, in their youth, kept them out of reach of the predators that wage so relentless a war on the terra-firma insects.

In their coloring, sometimes of the body only, sometimes of both wings and body, these *Neuropteræ* are

as brilliant as any butterfly or moth. In the largest species the body is a beautiful faded turquoise-green, while the head is a bright yellow; others are copper-red, both in wing and body, and others again have a purple body, and two transversal purple stripes on each of their four wings. As the diaphanous part of these latter is invisible when the insect is flying, it looks as if it were floating in the air, unsupported, but flanked on each side by four short purple bands, entirely separate from it but following all its movements, independent of the laws of gravitation, suspended in the air.

The queen of this order, a truly magnificent creature, has a jet-black body, while its wings are made of diaphanous black lace. When it alights, not only does the delicate design of the long wings show against the support on which it rests, but it is then seen that they are, all over their surface, *paillonnées* with tiny opalescent drops, as if they had been sprinkled with diamonds.

Mygale spiders abound on the footpaths and large *Nephilæ* weave their strong webs from tree to tree. Pride of place among the *Arachnidæ* belongs, however, to one small spider, distinguished alike by its beauty and by its resourcefulness as an architect. It is not indigenous to Nyasaland, for I have met it everywhere, from the Kilimanjaro to the Shire highlands. In size it is as large as a sixpenny piece, and in shape like an octagonal star; the back is bright yellow with two red spots in the middle, and the eight points, each of which covers one of the legs, are red also.

It builds its web, which is irregular in shape,

diagonally between two or three trees standing about six feet apart, and to a considerable height, so the outer thread of the longest side frequently attains a length of over twenty feet. This long outer thread the spider steadies in a curious way. In order to prevent it from swaying too much in the wind, possibly also as a signal, or a warning, it provides it with a kind of air-anchor in the shape of a leaf fastened to it lengthwise, about halfway between its upper and its lower end.

I fancied at first that these leaves had been carried there by the wind and caught in the web. Then it struck me that there was always only one leaf to a web, never more, and also that all these leaves bore a close resemblance to one another. Not only did they invariably belong to the same kind of tree, the only tree in the forest with comparatively large leaves, — the *Uapaca Kirkiana* or msuku, — but they were all stripped crosswise of half their membrane, leaving entire the stalk, which was fastened lengthwise to the main thread by means of other threads twisted tightly round both.

Any doubts which I at first entertained concerning the casualty, or otherwise, of the occurrence were dispelled after I had noticed one day, at a place which I used to pass frequently, that both web and anchor had disappeared overnight, having presumably been torn by a bird or a bat; for when I returned to the same spot a few days later I found the web restored, and a leaf hanging in its old place.

We read a great deal more about ants and bees than we do about spiders, probably because the dreadful

gregariousness of the former awakens chords of sympathy in man, whose latter-day ideal appears to be the attainment of the perfection of hymenopterian communal life. But to those whose tastes lie in an opposite direction these forest spiders, leading a one-family life in their self-built homes, intolerant of neighbors, like pioneers in the far Northwest, must appeal with a higher degree of congeniality.

While the bee yields to him reluctantly her nectar, the spider fights man's fight against the satanic insect-world. Our debt to the *Arachnidæ* and their webs exceeds perhaps all that we owe to all the fishermen of the seven seas. Not that this philanthropic activity is restricted to those spiders which live in the open air.

I may quote a very remarkable experience which I have had in this respect during two consecutive seasons in Nyasaland, whose mosquitoes enjoy a reputation—and in my opinion exaggerated—for particular ferocity. I was living, at that time, in a small house which stood in close proximity to both running and stagnant water and quite near to several native villages, a house, in fact, predestined by its situation to be a happy hunting-ground for mosquitoes. It had, besides, a thatched roof; the rooms had no ceiling; and within thirty yards of my bedroom windows stood a cluster of mango trees.

During the first of the two rainy seasons mosquitoes appeared in the usual numbers, putting sleep without a mosquito-curtain out of the question. They continued until far into the dry season. Natives, if you ask them how long the mosquito plague lasts,

will tell you that it does not come to an end before all the maize has been harvested.

I gave orders that no spider-webs were to be destroyed in the house, and not a single spider ("bui bui"), killed. When the second rainy season started, triangular spider-webs stretched, one above the other, at intervals of about ten inches, from top to bottom in every corner of every room, and the roof was plastered with them inside.

The dwelling now looked, to put it mildly, a bit untidy. But during the whole of that rainy season, which was exceptionally severe, I never once put up the mosquito-curtain, and not a single mosquito made its appearance.

Our subconscious appreciation of the spider attributes to it, in legend and in history, an individuality which we do not concede to insects in general; suffice it to mention, in this respect, the spiders of Mahomet, of Bruce, and of Christian the Second.

My irrepressible fox terriers, Cashel and Petiteriou, do not take much interest in spiders and insects, although in the house they object exceedingly to the presence of hunting wasps, which irritate them by the unearthly noises they produce when they get into a bamboo or a hollow piece of wood. But the birds of the forest provide them with excitement of a more pleasurable kind.

When the first berries ripen on the trees, a pair of trumpet-hornbill scouts arrive, whose mission it is to investigate the ground and then to report at headquarters on the other side of the colony. These two

emissaries, after a stay of a couple of days, disappear, and then it is not long before the whole tribe arrives and fills the forest with its melodious screams, a blend of the braying of an ass and the bleating of a goat.

It is evident that these ear-rending shrieks are sweet melodies to the two dogs and cause them real pleasure, for they follow the birds from tree to tree and, when the latter stop to feed, look up at them and wag their tails incessantly in the most friendly manner. There must be something besides the voices — something in the appearance of the hornbills — that appeals to them, the huge helmets, perhaps. But the birds themselves, conceited and stupid creatures, make no response to these well-meant advances.

The carrion crows which pay occasional visits to the forest, coming from estates in the neighborhood, are much more sensible, and freely enter into the spirit of the sport. They pretend to strike at the terriers; they alight on branches as near the ground as they think safe, and give utterance to a series of those queer and ridiculous sounds which are the speciality of ravens in both hemispheres, and to which Dickens has given the imprimatur in *Barnaby Rudge*. Then the fox terriers grow perfectly delirious, bark frantically, and in the vain hope of reaching the aggravating creatures, indulge in the wildest of buck-jumps high up into the air. To show their utter contempt for these vain attempts the crows assume an expression of supercilious disdain, and never budge an inch nor move an eyelid. Suddenly they dive, just in front of the dogs' noses, and fly along the ground, provocatively slow and tantalizingly near, hotly pursued, to

rise and settle on another tree, when the whole game starts anew.

Before the beginning of the rains, — of the impending start of which they are infallible heralds, — those grotesque creatures, the ground hornbills, announce their arrival in sonorous, bell-like, but rather monotonous sentences. These are pronounced alternately in two different keys, the one an octave higher than the other, by the three or five individuals of which the party invariably consists, while they walk along slowly and gravely, searching the ground for food. They keep on reiterating the syllables: "*Umm, umm, umtutu; umm, umm, ummtutu,*" sounds to which native lore has given various interpretations, as, for instance:

"Mother! mother!"

"What is the matter?"

"Come and help me!"

"What is the matter?"

"I have found a snail; I cannot break it!"

and so on. These birds are fetish from the Juba to the Zambesi, and perhaps beyond on both sides, and are never killed, except sometimes for fun by Europeans.

They also have the gift of exciting my dogs. When these hear the characteristic voices at night, they are up and out like wildfire, barking hysterically.

People who do not always keep in touch with civilization occasionally have difficulties with their watches, particularly when they are blessed with native servants who suffer under the illusion that they are heaven-born mechanics. During such periods birds with regular habits are of great help — chiefly

at night, as the sun, except on overcast days, effectually replaces the best of artificial timekeepers.

The palm in this respect belongs of course to our old friend chanticleer, but he is not always available, although it is astonishing in how many apparently uninhabited localities his cheerful voice, carried far from some distant native village, will sometimes be heard quite unexpectedly about three A. M.

The *centropus* cuckoo is, of all live timekeepers, the earliest, starting about one o'clock at night. Its call, a series of *coos*, repeated with increasing velocity until they culminate in one long-drawn, vibrating note, like the whirr of a flying arrow, is one of the most characteristic notes of tropical and subtropical Africa.

When the ground hornbills begin their sonorous conversations, one may safely conclude that three A. M. is not far off, while the voices of the fish-eagle, the quail, and the wild doves herald, in succession, the approach of dawn.

Even the small birds are much earlier risers in tropical Africa than they are in Europe, and their half-drowsy chirping can often be heard long before sunrise. Among these, one of the most frequently heard is the modestly plumaged bulbul, whose voice has been celebrated in Oriental poems. Although its single sentence cannot really be called a song, there is rare charm in it, as it begins with cheerful brio and expires like a sigh in one plaintive, grave, and tender accent. One might apply to it what the Viennese used to say about the *Walzer* of Lanner, to the sounds of which our grandmothers used to dance: "a smile, while a tear shines in the eye."

The plantain-eaters or "turacos," which stay in the same locality all the year round, are the most numerous, the loudest, the liveliest, and — kingfishers excepted — the best attired of all the feathered bipeds of the Myombo forest. They are represented chiefly by one of their most beautiful varieties, the *gallirex*, with purple wings, a peacock neck and body, and a hooded black head. All day long they call and repeat incessantly their own native name: "*Kookoolukulu!*" At the beginning of the rainy season, *pendant la saison des amours*, this activity develops into a frenzy. Their favorite haunts are the large trees with their many branches, along which they run like squirrels.

Major Dr. Hinde, the Gibbon of the Congo Arabs' Empire, writes, in his book on the Masai, that this bird was to them sacred, and that in their wars with other tribes a tame turaco was carried along as a mascot on the shoulders of one of the warriors. This custom calls to mind the tame eagle which Louis Napoleon carried on his shoulder when he landed in Boulogne in 1840 — although that poor creature, which, according to the historian, looked tousled and uncomfortable during the adventure, failed, at least for the occasion, to live up to the symbol which it was intended to represent.

The silent and melancholy goatsucker is the anti-thesis of the bold and frisky kookoolukulu. For three years I have invariably met the same pair on the same hill — lucky enough to escape, in the dense thicket of shrubs, the lynx eyes of the natives, who are always ready to kill and eat them.

With their weird habit of remaining motionless on the ground until they are nearly trodden upon, and then, in the last second to rise in their swift and noiseless flight only to alight again a little further on, they too are a source of puzzling worry to my two wild dogs. These same tactics the birds pursue in the dark, and they are a familiar object to most men who have marched through the night, when they often fly in front of a caravan for a considerable distance, a few yards ahead of the first man, — frequently to their undoing, — rising and alighting like ghosts.

The prince of the tribe is the banner goatsucker, an incomparably beautiful bird, rarely seen, and when it appears a sure harbinger of the approaching rains, like the bucorax. The outward feathers of its wings are yards in length, and, to see one flying slowly, its long pennants waving behind, is an impression which, once experienced, is never forgotten.

Two more birds of the forest, the one modest in appearance, the other a living jewel, like Queen Yseult's faëry dog *Petiteriou*, are remarkable for individuality. The first is a variety of the king crow, a bird not larger than an ouzel, yet of such intrepid courage that one of them will put to flight the carrion crow which tries to rob it of its eggs. Combined, they rout the largest birds of prey. Natives persecute them relentlessly. Heaps consisting entirely of king-crow feathers are a common sight in the vicinity of native huts in the Shire highlands.

The second is the small blue kingfisher, a quaint little creature with a long and impudent nose, like *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It is either very bold or else

very cute in distinguishing between friend and foe. Singly, in pairs, or in threes they occasionally come into my hut, even when I am inside, and hunt for wasps, crickets, spiders, and other boarders. One of them once sat down on the back of my chair while I was writing, and there is no doubt that they would become quite tame, if the appearance of one of my "boys" in the door did not invariably put them to flight; for they, too, are killed and eaten by natives, and they certainly know it.

Snakes occur in the forest in the usual numbers and varieties. It is extraordinary how well dogs, at least those which have been born in the Tropics, know from their earliest days how to distinguish snakes from other creatures. There is nothing that my fox terriers will not tackle, to my incessant bother. I have even to keep them off the large chameleons. But whenever they see a snake on the ground, they stand still, at first in silence, and then barking, but without going near it. They have behaved like this since the very beginning. Maybe they were taught by poor Biddie, their mother, who has since been eaten by a leopard. Or it may be instinct. One wonders if instinct is not merely the memory of passed incarnations, which has been denied to man, with the exception of a few Mahatmas.

If the snake happens to be moving in their direction they give it a wide berth; if it is moving away from them they follow it a distance, barking. That they stand motionless when they see a snake lying in their path is possibly due to their being aware that snakes, like lions, bulls, and other large mammals, are consti-

tutionally disinclined to attack anything that faces them in perfect immobility.

The smaller and sharper of the two dogs will even stand still and bark when he sees lying by the side of the road a root or a dried branch resembling a snake in shape.

Whether African snakes are less dangerous to dogs than the few kinds of venomous snakes which occur in Europe, or whether African dogs are cleverer in evading the attacks of snakes than European dogs, it would be difficult to say; but while, fortunately, I remember only a few cases of dogs having been killed by snakes in Africa, I have known several such in Southern Europe—every one of them in the Dalmatian Islands.

Anybody who has been in South Africa, particularly in Natal, must have heard stories about the black and the green "mamba," illustrative of the fierceness of these creatures. I remember being told about a Boer who had all the bullocks of his span killed by one and the same mamba, on the road, the snake jumping from one beast to another as they were trekking along.

In the course of twenty-eight years I have only once come into contact with an authenticated case of a European's death occasioned by the bite of a snake. This was in a small alluvial gold-mining camp in the Cape Colony. I was told on my arrival there that a few days before a boy of twelve, the son of a miner, had been killed by a snake. There had been no doctor available, but everything had been done to save the child by one of the diggers, who knew about snake-

bites and their cure. The boy had even been made to drink a full bottle of undiluted whiskey; but that too had been in vain, the youngster dying almost immediately after he had finished the bottle.

It is possible that in the Tropics proper the heat of the sun renders the snakes more lazy, and that this is the reason why they have so much less to account for in the neighborhood of the Equator than farther south.

My mud-and-wattle huts in the forest are joined by a bamboo stockade, which forms, in front, a courtyard about one quarter of an acre in size. During the night, I am in the habit of leaving open both the door of the stockade and the door of the hut in which I sleep, — doors facing each other, — so that my dogs may pass in and out.

One night they had rushed out as usual, and I heard their barks in the distance; by and by these sounded nearer and nearer; the dogs were returning to the camp, either following something or driving something before them. This was nothing unusual, as I kept, at the time, a tame genette, which they often followed in its nightly excursions.

But the genette usually followed a bee line, jumping from tree to tree, while in this instance the something driven by the dogs — rather slowly, so it appeared to me — was obviously following the native footpath, which passed at some distance from my camp, with a branch diverging to the latter.

When the dogs had arrived behind the hut, still barking furiously, I got up and stepped out in front of the door of my sleeping-hut, which is crowned with a porch forming a kind of daïs. There was a moon, but

the sky was clouded, and things could be discerned only dimly.

Just as I stepped out, the dogs came in through the gate of the stockade, and almost at the same moment I thought I heard, close to me, the blowing of a mamba, which is quite distinct from the "naya's" penetrating hiss. With the greatest difficulty I drove those irresponsible dogs out of the yard and closed the gate; then I went back into the hut and lit a candle, and there, in a corner, lay a black mamba in a coil, much too exhausted even to lift its head.

The probability is that it was deliberately under way to my camp when it was met by my dogs, as this was at the height of the dry season, when snakes frequently come into houses and tents, in search of moisture and mice. It is always repugnant to turn against a refugee in one's own house, whether it be a Roundhead or a Cavalier or a miserable, hunted beast. But I did not know how long the mamba intended to stay, nor how long my irrepressible dogs would consent to remain outside; moreover, I had seen, a year before, a tame monkey die a slow death from the bite of a tree-snake. So martial law had to be passed.

I measured the mamba on the following morning; it was just seven feet long, and far from full-grown.

Even if chameleons in Nyasaland do not attain the size of the large specimens indigenous in Madagascar, individuals one foot in length, with exclusion of the tail, are no uncommon occurrence. Natives assert that these large chameleons catch and eat young birds. I have not tried to test the truth of this information, as my interest in the question is not strong

enough to induce me to hara-kirize even one of those harmless creatures.

As I have mentioned on another occasion, they are feared by natives more than snakes, their bite being supposed to cause incurable disease, and the most extraordinary yarns are told about them, as, for instance, that the female, when she realizes that her time has come, lets herself drop from the top of a tree, gives birth to her progeny immediately after touching the ground, and dies. Although I thought that it might have been based on an isolated single occurrence, I had my doubts concerning the report; so once, when I was standing under a tree just outside my stockade, and a large chameleon, with a horn suggestive both of the rhino and the narval, fell down flop at my feet from the very top, my expectancy was keen, the more so as a native standing near exclaimed excitedly: "Now she will give birth to a lot of young, and then she will die!"

But Unicorn, quite undisturbed by its fifty-foot drop, got up, walked to the tree in *Parade-Marsch*, started to climb it, and disappeared.

It is not to be wondered at if, in a country where every mammal from the mouse to the elephant is an edible commodity for one man or another, and therefore subject to incessant persecution, while it sees its natural habitat relentlessly and inexorably both curtailed and pushed back as season follows season, the larger varieties should have almost completely vanished, as residents, from the Myombo forest of the Shire, while the smaller ones, being for the most part nocturnal in habit, are rarely seen.



BOY WITH THE DREADED CHAMELEON

Sometimes one meets, on native paths, elephant-nosed shrews, galloping along like very small horses, looking to right and left. The merely benevolent interest which I felt in former years for these quaint little creatures has, since I read Henry Fairfield Osborn's *Origin and Evolution of Life*, where it is stated that we are probably descended from an arborescent shrew, changed into affectionate feelings of relationship, mixed with a certain awe, as I cannot help thinking that, but for a lucky hazard, the position might have been reversed!

The fact that these animals belong to the order of *Insectivora* ought to secure them, in countries where man is at his wits' end to discover new ways to fight the devastating insect-pests, protection against persecution. They form, instead, one of the favorite dishes in the bill of fare of that human hyena, the Ngoni, and are ruthlessly destroyed.

In a former chapter I mentioned the prevalence, in the Myombo forest, of those plaintive-voiced vegetarians, the civet cats. These animals deserve, on account of their remarkable attributes, a much greater fame than they really enjoy. Quite apart from their being the producers of a valuable essence, they follow, besides, sanitary regulations which would do credit to a human Town Council; of these the most stupendous detail could be rendered only in the French of Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*.

I remember seeing it stated somewhere that civet cats cannot be tamed, while in reality, when caught fairly young, they become as tame as dogs. The recorder of that slander doubtless went for informa-

tion to those who keep civet cats as a source of income. The mentality of people who, acquainted with the sort of cage in which these unfortunate creatures are kept, and with the *modus procedendi* employed to make them yield their treasure, would still expect them to show toward their masters an amiable disposition, must have some resemblance to that of the eel-skinner who elicited Doctor Johnson's comment.

One may frequently see civet cats on moonlight nights, picking up berries and fruit at the foot of certain trees, preferably wild fig-trees.

Jackals have the same habit, and will often stand on their hind legs, like the dancing wolves of Mowgli, to reach branches that are inaccessible while they are on all fours.

Once, in the forest, one of my terriers began to jump up the trunk of a decapitated old tree about four feet in height. As I came near, the trunk discharged five rockets, which shot out of it into the overhanging branches of other trees, where they flew from branch to branch with tails like comets and faces like the Cheshire Cat. They were young galagos, disturbed from their sleep.

The ghostly cry of these beautiful creatures rises at night sometimes close to my camp, reminding me of what I have read about a Patagonian bird whose voice is so terrible that it freezes the blood in the stoutest heart. This lemur must be a very near relation of that bird.

It begins in low, whimpering accents, which grow louder and louder and swell to a volume of heart-

rending wail, so intense in its expression of sorrow that it makes the listener's hair stand on end. If restless, wandering ghosts of the departed, burdened with a load of sin and remorse, may communicate their agony in a way intelligible to mortal ears, it is thus that their lament must sound. I have been wondering whether there is any connection between that lemur's dreadful complaint and the designation *lémures*, which ancient mythology has given to the unhappy souls of the dead excluded from Elysium.

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